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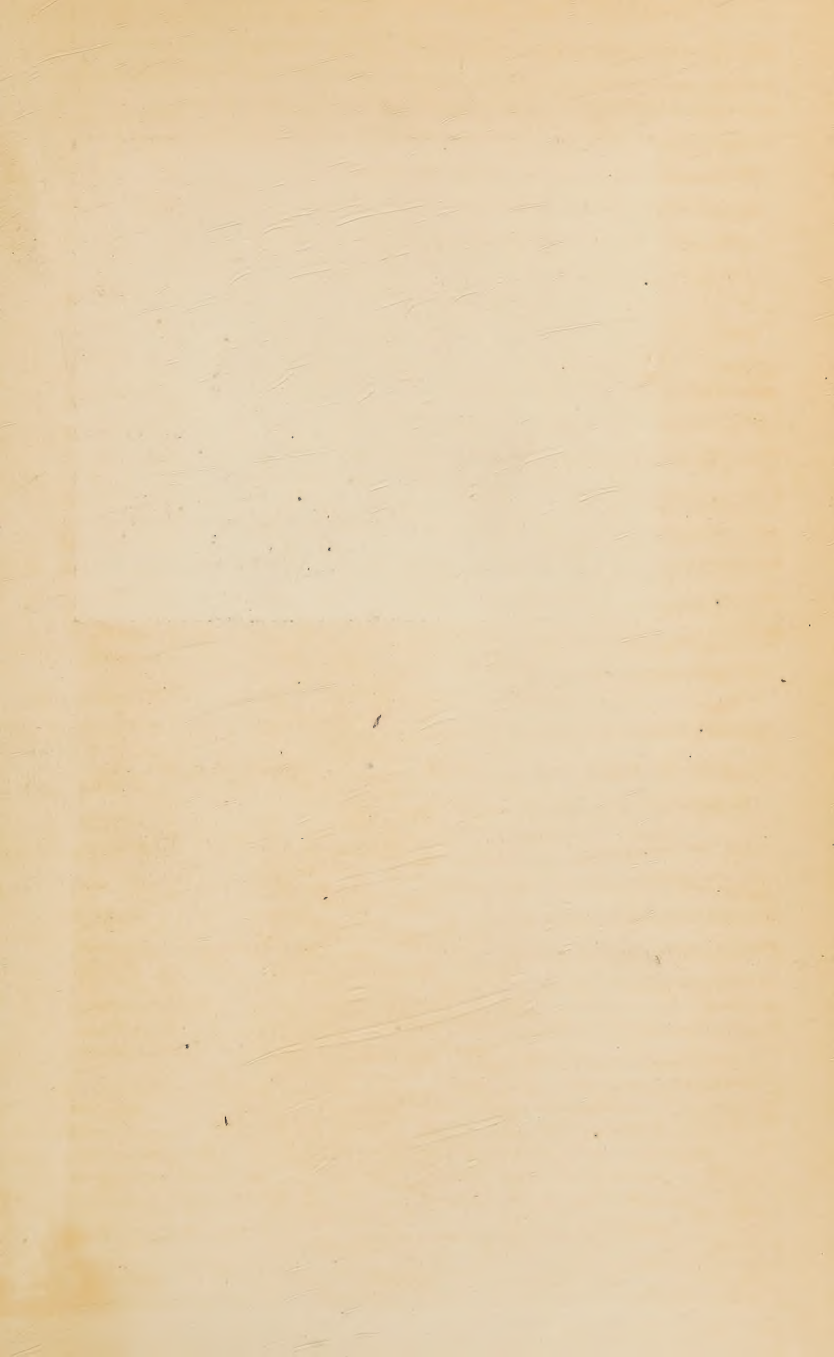
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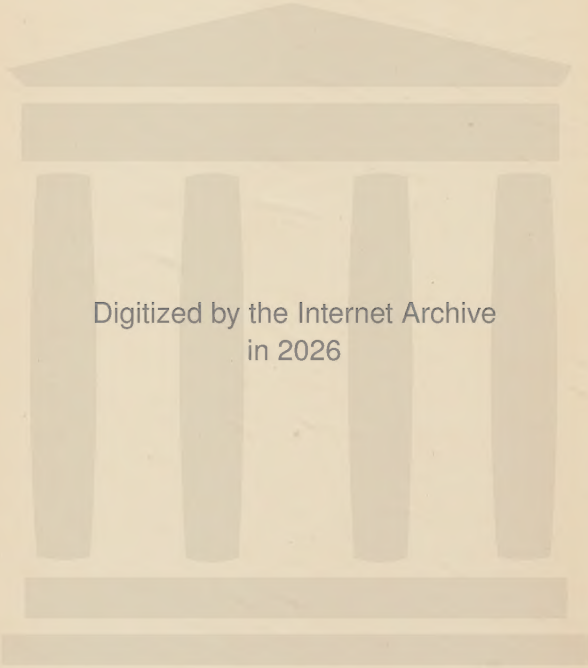
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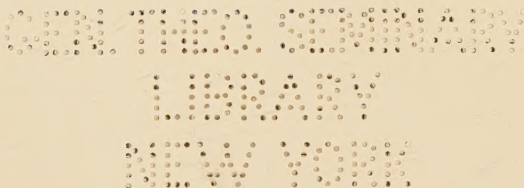
CHRISTIANITY MISUNDERSTOOD

CHRISTIANITY MISUNDERSTOOD

BY THE REV.

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'SPIRITISM,' ETC.



LONDON

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

NEW YORK AND TORONTO: THE MACMILLAN CO.

1923

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PREFACE

THE following papers are an attempt to clear Christian doctrine of some misconceptions which obtain in the minds of many. The fact that, as the Bishop of St. Albans lately wrote, 'there are hundreds of men and women of all sections of the community who at present have no use for any kind of institutional religion,' is, I think, due rather to a misunderstanding of what the Church exists for and of what it is at, than to a considered rejection of its belief and practice. Having shared some of these misunderstandings in the past, I am in keen sympathy with those who labour under them, while my experience in gaining what I believe to be a clearer vision of the Christian Faith may enable me to assist in the removal of such misconceptions.

To each paper I have added a list of books designed to help the inquirer in further and more positive study. These lists are brief, the selection being limited to such works as I have found most helpful—works easily understood and written in sympathy with those who experience modern difficulties.

I would take this opportunity of pressing the need of more local libraries of Christian literature. Such books as are recommended here are seldom to be met with in free libraries. It may not be possible for the Church to compete with certain religious societies in providing large and prominently placed reading-rooms where information can be obtained free of charge, but

there seems no reason why every rural deanery and, indeed, every large parish should not have a well-selected collection of explanatory and apologetic books. Experience shows me that people eagerly avail themselves of such opportunities.

T. J. H.

Easter, 1923.

NOTE.—The chapters of this book are obtainable separately in pamphlet form at 3d. each.

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I

WHAT IS MEANT BY A PERSONAL GOD, AND BY REVELATION ?

THE task attempted in this series of papers is not that of 'proving' the truth of Christianity, but of trying to remove certain misunderstandings which haunt and obscure the Christian message to-day.

The first step in such a task seems to be to indicate what Christians mean when they speak of a personal God, for the personality of God is the very substance of the Christian creed.

I

The religious difficulty of our day is not the existence of God, but the existence of a personal God. Nothing bears clearer testimony to this than the literature of what is sometimes called 'the higher thought.' Most of it contains a direct challenge to the fundamental Christian conception of Divine Personality.

Why is this? What is it that makes the thought of a personal God unacceptable to the average intelligent man and woman? With most of us I think the difficulty turns on an imaginary antagonism between personality and the idea of God as 'immanent' in all things. This latter idea, which so largely occupies our minds to-day—and which is certainly one inculcated by Christianity—is the result, on its religious side, of reaction from crude Deism, and, on the modern side, of attempts to utilize the scientific postulate of energy. We are to a very great extent creatures of reaction, and for two hundred years at least in this country and on the Continent the mind has oscillated between extreme statements of the transcendence and immanence of God without appearing to arrive at any clear reconciliation between them. The invasion of 'organic' ideas and

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conceptions in the early nineteenth century counteracted the crude and inadequate Deism of the eighteenth; and as soon as the tyranny of mechanical thought which drifted across the later nineteenth century broke and disappeared, the conception of immanence returned with tenfold force under the 'new mysticism.' 'To-day, altogether outside the limits of theology, current literature exhibits a strong tendency to insist on the immanence of God, while remaining comparatively oblivious of His transcendence.*' Hence it comes that the idea of personality is repugnant to many because it is associated in their minds with that of a Being Who dwells apart from the universe—the 'magnified and non-natural Man,' which so greatly worried Matthew Arnold.

Now, in the attempt to step clear from mere fluctuations of thought, let us ask: Are we obliged when we speak of God as 'personal' to think of One Who dwells apart from nature and the mind of man? Is the antagonism which many of us suspect to exist between immanence and personality other than imaginary, the result of a rather arbitrary and restricted notion of personality itself?

The fact that a writer is addressing himself to 'persons' may surely relieve him—and them—of any attempt at an elaborate treatise on personality. At any rate, all I ask for my present purpose is the assumption of personality in ourselves. If any of us is afflicted with a hyperhumility which cannot grant this simple assumption, I can only hope that Professor Jevons' admirable work on the subject may give us a better conceit of ourselves!† But, assuming the personality of the reader, let me put the difficulty of the modern man thus: if God pervades all things, how can He be a Person distinct from all things? That is the difficulty confronting him. And it is exactly the sort of difficulty he ought to have with his own personality.

* G. C. Jovce, D.D., *God* (Modern Oxford Tracts), p. 22. Longmans, 1914.

† F. B. Jevons, Litt.D., *Personality*. Methuen and Co., 1913.

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If he, the 'person,' the self-conscious *ego*, pervades his body down to the tiniest nerve-fibre, how can he be distinct from his body? Yet he is distinct from it, and he knows nothing more clearly than that he is distinct from it. When his head aches, he does not say his *ego* aches. When he has an attack of indigestion, he does not say that his personality is out of order. He is in the closest conceivable union with his head and his digestive organs, yet he is distinct from them. He is immanent throughout his body, yet he is not identical with it. In fact, he is an admirable example of the first principle of Christian revelation.

Moreover, the body with which he sits reading this book is quite different from that which he used to hold a book and extract the ideas expressed in it seven years ago. Yet 'he' is the same 'person.' His body will die; its constituent elements will be distributed throughout nature, yet that fact affords him no reason for supposing that 'he' will be extinct. Apart altogether from Christian belief, we are all more or less penetrated to-day with the idea of the survival of personality. Despite, then, the closeness of the union between our 'self' and our body, 'we' have a real existence distinct from our bodies, and in all probability independent of our bodies. And further, this distinction is one which we are obliged to assume in all we think, say, or do.

Now, in the place of the body put the universe, and in the place of our 'self' put God. Let us say that God is in as close a relationship with the universe as we are with our body. We shall, I think, concur that this meets the requirements of an 'organic conception' of the universe; at the same time we shall admit how far it is from *identifying* God with the universe. The universe undergoes change—in fact, it *is* change. Bergson in the twentieth century restates the philosophy of St. John in the first century. Yet this change does not necessarily affect the personality of God any more than the changes we experience affect our self-identity. The universe may pass into lifeless vapour,

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but this would not affect the existence of God any more than the loss of our body need necessarily affect our existence. In other words, God is immanent throughout the universe, but God is not identical with the universe. But if not identical, He is distinct from it—that is to say, He is personal. This is the relation between God and the universe, according to Christian belief—a relation of intimate union on the one hand; on the other hand, a distinct existence. As a matter of fact, what I have been trying to say was suggested, not by any modern theological position, but by a sentence from one of the early Fathers of the Church: ‘as the soul of man is to his body, so is God to the world.’*

And this is what Christianity means, and has always meant, when it speaks of a personal God—not a ‘magnified and non-natural man,’ not an Olympian deity dwelling apart. There is nothing in the word ‘person’ to justify such an impression. There is nothing in Catholic teaching to imply it. Christ’s words concerning the birds and flowers and the hairs of our head,† his Apostle’s quotation from Kleantes,‡ clearly imply the closeness of union between God and the universe. And as the revelation in Christ gradually issued in a philosophy, the closeness of the Divine relationship with the universe was maintained by theologians like Augustine and Aquinas. The Deism against which modern thought has reacted was as foreign to the mind of Christianity as is the materialism of Tyndall and Freud on the one hand, or the pantheism of Spinoza on the other. We have only to pass beyond the complications of post-Reformation controversy to enter a purer atmosphere where, notwithstanding geocentric standpoint, the ‘organic conception of the universe’ reigns in thought. ‘As the soul of man is in his body, so is God in the world.’

But I would go further than this. Not only is there no opposition between our present conception of the universe and the Divine Personality; but I submit that

* Augustine, *Con. Epistolam Manichæi*, xv., xvi., n. 20.

† Matt. vi. 26, 28 f.; x. 29 f.

‡ Acts xvii. 28.

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if there be a God at all, He must be 'personal.' In maintaining this I shall have to make use of a method familiar to us in our schooldays, and commence with the well-worn expression, 'For if not.' For if the idea 'God' does not convey personality, then the word must be either a name for an abstraction, or for the sum total of things.* But an abstraction is simply the result of a mental process. It has no necessary existence apart from the abstracting mind. We speak, for example, of 'beauty,' but 'beauty' is simply the impression left on our minds by beautiful things. If, then, God is an abstraction, the name means no more than the result of certain mental processes. This is probably all 'God' does mean to extreme subjectivists of the Modernist type. But in that case the word 'God' merely denotes an element in human nature, and may very well be dispensed with. There can be no advantage in deifying a psychological process.

If, on the other hand, we mean by 'God' the sum total of things, then we mean everything, and in that case we are no further on than primitive man. Once we say that God is all things, and that all things are God, we are left with 'all things'! We cannot interpret the universe, for we have no differentiating factor. We have got rid of the crudities of Deism, but only by capitulating to materialism. Pantheism and materialism are really synonymous. Once we *identify* God with the universe, our only rational hesitation is whether we spell 'universe' with a capital letter or a small one. It does not really matter which. In either case the universe, including, of course, human life, remains an enigma. ,

Moreover, if 'God' merely refers to the totality of things, what are we going to make of evil? Mr. Chesterton pricked the bubble of pantheism with his

* Theosophists tell us in almost the same breath that God is impersonal, and yet that He is universal Love. 'Love' is a personal conception, and must imply personal expression. Until Theosophy has decided which of these contradictory doctrines it stands for, it cannot hope to appeal to serious minds. A similar contradiction is apparent in the teaching of Christian Science.

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pertinent question : ' Is Piccadilly God ? ' If God is ' all things,' we have to deal with Piccadilly as a Divine phenomenon ! Evil is a sufficiently severe problem, when we have accepted all the indications Christianity affords us of an ultimate solution, but if ' God ' is ' all things,' evil is something more than a problem ; it is a Divine Purpose. That is why pantheism, East and West alike, has proved itself a doctrine of despair.

One other point : if ' God ' is merely a name for the totality of things, what about worship ? The primitive, the inalienable instinct of man is to worship. What do we propose to worship ? We cannot worship ' the sum total of things '—even Spinoza confessed that to be a mental exercise quite beyond him. Then we must make a selection. What shall it be ?—' the stars, the seas, the hills, the plains,' or, again, Piccadilly Circus ? Doubtless some will worship one aspect of the ' totality,' some another. That points to a revival of polytheism. That, in fact, is what it is. Pantheism and polytheism are one and the same thing. Polytheism is ceremonial pantheism. It took the vast intellectual resources of Socrates and Plato to deliver the ancient world from the nightmare of departmental deities, and do we, in the twentieth century, seriously propose to revive it ?

But having come thus far in my *reductio ad absurdum*, the modern pantheist interrupts me : ' No, no,' he exclaims, ' what we mean is that we regard the sum total of things as the manifestation of One Divine Life.' Very well, I reply, and so do I ; so does Christianity—with certain qualifications. But then that is not pantheism at all. A Divine Life manifest throughout the sum total of things is *other than* the sum total of things, or it could not be ' manifested.' Therefore the Divine Life is not identical with the universe. Therefore, again, the Divine Life is distinct—which is exactly what the word ' personal ' conveys. If ideas have any intelligibility, if language is capable of conveying them, either God is personal, or there is no God.

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2

As Christians we believe this Divine Being has disclosed His nature and will partly in prophet and seer, but chiefly in what we believe to be His perfect Self-expression (for us) in Christ. As we owe our belief in, and knowledge of, a personal God to these two sources—which we speak of as ‘revelation’—it is evident that the subject of revelation is inseparably connected with that of a personal God.

Revelation is a subject of much misunderstanding. Let us try to lay aside preconceived notions and approach it as we would, say, the analogous subject of education. In the first place, we shall agree that to impart, or acquire, knowledge of *persons* is a task quite different from imparting, or acquiring, knowledge of *things*. We can measure the difference by the training of our own children to ‘know’ us, and in so doing we come by a just notion of what is implied in the ‘revelation’ of God. The school tasks require only mental application and may be quickly learned, but what years it takes a child to appreciate our tastes, to anticipate our wishes, to share our standpoint—in a word, to ‘know’ us! Between intellectual knowledge and personal knowledge there is a wide difference.

All moral and spiritual knowledge such as is involved in ‘getting to know’ a person is necessarily of slow acquirement, and this reflection should prepare us to expect that the knowledge of God on the part of the human race would be a slow process, and one, moreover, in which progress was very uneven. It should also prepare us to appreciate the other side, the Divine side, of the process, for God could only impart a personal knowledge of Himself through the experience of the race ‘by divers portions and by divers manners.’ The intellectual line of advance reached its goal in a comparatively short time. But once having arrived at the conception of unity in nature, and reduced mythic divinities to One, it advanced no further. It had no power to do so, any more than the

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child who has had the misfortune to dwell apart from his father can arrive at that father's character from the mere fact of his fatherhood.

Hence the moral and spiritual education of the race centred, not in the people foremost in intellectual equipment, but in those whose genius afforded them the deepest spiritual penetration. The spiritual genius of the Hebrews, indeed, started from the very point where intellectual discovery paused. The unity of the Divine nature was the fundamental conviction of the Hebrew: 'the Lord our God is One.' According to the late G. J. Romanes, 'it is hardly possible to exaggerate mankind's indebtedness to Israel. If it had not been for the Jews, the human race would not have had any religion worth our serious consideration as such.'* And not only their genius, but their history, singularly enabled them for their task. 'By a train of circumstances as remarkable as anything in the history of mankind, the genius of the Jewish people became the crucible into which were flung one by one the leading religious ideas of the race, to emerge, purified and enriched, by the alchemy of Christ.'† While, however, we recognize the singular degree in which the genius and history of Israel prepared them for their task, we are bound to acknowledge that, on their own confession, that task was an *imparted* one. They claimed to have received its principles from the Being they worshipped and served, nor is there anything in their history that would belie their claim, and resolve the 'revelation' to a self-evolved figment of consciousness.‡

It is necessary to keep in mind the Divine response as well as the human quest. At a time like the present, when psychological interests are to the fore, the tendency is all in the direction of making much of the human element in revelation, and treating the knowledge of Divine things as though it were evolution of consciousness. This is to mistake the subject as much

* *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 159.

† See the author's *Religious Instinct*, p. 57.

‡ See Dr. Gore's *Belief in God*, chap. v.

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as when the opposite error prevailed, and men thought of 'inspiration' as setting aside the human instrument. Revelation is a real communication from God, though it comes coloured and limited by the medium through which it passes. All imparted knowledge shares something of the mentality of the individual who receives it, and it is not otherwise with the knowledge of God's nature and will. But the fact that such knowledge comes to us mixed with human limitation is no more a reason for attributing it wholly to the human consciousness than is the imperfectly learned lesson a reason for supposing it originated with the child.

Of the education thus advanced we regard the Old Testament as the record. At the same time, we do not say that the Jew had a monopoly of the knowledge of God. As we have already indicated, a consciousness of the Divine is everywhere, and its expressions are everywhere. But we believe that the Jew was supremely fitted to receive and express what he did, and we regard his sacred books as registering the highest impressions of the mind and will of God before the coming of Christ. Athanasius puts the matter in a way quite 'modern' in its standpoint when he speaks of the Hebrew people as 'the sacred school of the knowledge of God and of the spiritual life for all mankind'—a 'school,' be it observed, not a monopoly.

Nor will it seem arbitrary that one race should have been selected for such a purpose when we reflect that all human advance appears to be the result of such 'selections,' from the 'natural selection' with which science has rendered us familiar to the special contributions of the various peoples at the present day to the larger commonwealth of the human race.

And what, in brief, was the contribution made through Israel to our knowledge of God? This: that the One God of nature, the Creator and Sustainer of all that is, is above all the eternally Righteous One. 'The essential righteousness of God is the central idea of the Old Testament. The sense of it bowed men down in utter humility. It forced them to think of Him as the

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absolute Creator, alone self-existent, alone the Object of worship. This is the permanent element in the Old Testament. It lives on in the New. It is the backbone of Christianity.*

Such a knowledge was not acquired without phases which are elementary, and which came in for revision as the education proceeded. These phases are preserved in the record, and it must always be remembered that the Old Testament is the *record* of an education as well as its final result. This is continually being overlooked by those who treat the Bible as uniformly 'the Word of God.' We must not suppose that because we are unable to 'accept' the more elementary and transient phases of revelation we thereby reject revelation. Let us frankly admit that the fuller revelation in Christ has rendered these phases impossible for us. We can no longer say that because a thing is 'in the Bible' it claims acceptance or assent. To do so would be to mistake the whole purpose of the Scriptures as a *record*.

Take, for example, that much mistaken subject, anthropomorphism. The word itself is sufficiently terrific to suggest something of the 'policy of frightfulness' in those who employ it controversially. As an opprobrious epithet perhaps no other word has a bigger reputation. Yet beneath its polysyllabic exterior it is really quite friendly. It only means the representation of God under human ways of thinking and acting. Now, it stands to reason that if we are to acquire any knowledge of God it must be in terms of our own ways of thinking and acting, since only by such means could God be intelligible. We can only learn a language by finding out what is the meaning of the words of that language in our own tongue. We keep a dictionary by us, and we plod on, expressing so far as is possible the thought hidden under those strange words into the words with which we are familiar. Now, 'anthropomorphism' is nothing more dreadful than our dictionary in learning to know the Divine thought. Were

* Dr. Gore, *The New Theology and the Old Religion*, p. 46.

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it not for anthropomorphism, revelation would be no revelation at all. As, however, we become more conversant with our foreign language, its words and phrases begin to have for us a meaning of their own. We enter into the mentality of the language. It extends and enriches our conceptions. We even say of certain words and idioms that they are 'untranslatable,' by which we mean that we can enter into their value independently of their equivalents in our own tongue. So we succeed not only in acquiring a language, but in passing into the mind of a people outside our own race.

Similarly, with anthropomorphism, it is necessary that Divine thought should be expressed in human terms. And at first this anthropomorphism will be very crude. Yet as the spiritual training proceeds it is found that man can enter into some real apprehension of God's love, power, and purpose, and the saint and mystic show us this capacity in a very high degree. While, however, this necessity of thought must be allowed for, the striking thing about the Bible is its refusal to be content with anthropomorphism. Scripture is always transcending the human. As we translate the message, we are ourselves translated. We are taken into the heart of One Whose 'ways are not our ways, neither His thoughts our thoughts.' We learn that He is '*not a man* that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent.' He is 'the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is holy.' If anthropomorphism were the vicious circle the secularist would have us believe, there could be no such escape into realms of immutable truth and pure being as these expressions indicate. Moreover, if—as we have assumed all alone—personality is a quality which man has in common with God, then anthropomorphism is not only a legitimate, but the natural, way of acquiring the knowledge of God. It is a case of the child coming to understand the parent by means of his own experience.

We may feel in reading much of the Old Testament

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that God had to stoop very low to reach and train man's religious consciousness. That is a humbling thought. It is good for us. But the question that challenges our answer is this : Granted the moral and spiritual qualities exercised in *personal* knowledge, can we imagine God revealing Himself in any other way than He did ? If man had been capable of receiving a full and complete revelation at once, he would not have needed a revelation at all.

3

Meanwhile, 'the evolution of Hebrew prophecy shows a movement which demands that the prophet shall become, not by his word only, but by his personality, a revelation of God. So the Messianic hope becomes more and more a hope that God will manifest Himself in some higher type of personality.'* This hope we believe to be realized in Christ. As we are now concerned with the way in which the revelation of the Divine Personality culminates in Him, I shall for the present pass by the 'miracles' which ushered in and closed His work on earth, and His human character, and His sublime moral teaching, and confine our attention to what I would speak of as His God-consciousness.

We can scarcely speak of Christ as a 'teacher,' so widely did the *impression* He created differ from teaching. In this lies His sublime originality. In Him we mark a total absence of the sort of appeal familiar in those who had preceded Him. It was acknowledged by those who knew Him. 'He spake with authority.' To put it as exactly as one can, He spoke of God *at first-hand*. When we read a man's Life we may be able to form some impression, more or less accurate, of what he was like ; but if the man has been our friend, if we have enjoyed intimate association with him

* Dr. Orchard, *The Necessity of Christ*, p. 106. The whole of the chapter, 'The Necessity of Christ to Personality,' should be carefully studied.

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during a number of years, we shall know him as no biography, however 'close to life,' could make him known to us. Friendship will have revealed the man to us.

This is how Christ revealed God—that is to say, Himself. He took certain men and became their Friend. To them He opened unsparingly His mind and heart. He gave them to share, so far as they were able to share it, His innermost life. Such a method had, to speak reverently, its limitations—the limitations attendant on all effort to impart knowledge of a personal kind, the immaturity of the uninstructed mind to receive it. To remedy this He promised the correcting and maturing guidance of a Holy Spirit Who, He foretold, should dwell in those who opened their hearts to Him.

We shall not understand by this that Jesus innovated on the knowledge of God already possessed by those amongst whom He appeared. On the contrary, 'the conception of God as Creator and Lord finds (in Him) its completion in the thought of His Fatherhood, and the idea of His righteousness in the idea of His love.'* In addition, however, to this is the serene but positive assurance with which He proposes Himself as the centre of the life and destiny of all men.† Equally prominent and personal, though differing in function, is the place which the Holy Spirit is seen to occupy in all the revealings of His own consciousness. We are compelled to borrow the language of the Church, and speak of this as a triune conception of the Divine. Nothing else will satisfy the impression retained in the Gospels and the early literature of Christianity. It is quite impossible to interpret Christ's words as inculcating belief in three 'gods,' or anything parallel with the 'triads' of Egypt and India. At the same time, it is equally impossible to deny that the disclosure which

* Dr. Gore, *The New Theology and the Old Religion*, p. 47 ; *Belief in God*, p. 96 ff.

† See V., where this claim is drawn, not from the Fourth Gospel, but from the Synoptics.

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He makes is that of a mysterious 'Three' within the Unity of the Divine Life. Certainly it is this latter conception that Christian thought derived from Him, and it is along that line that Christianity has most fruitfully developed.

It goes without saying—or it should do at this time of day—that reason offers no opposition to this triune conception of God—always provided it is regulated by the most careful and reasonable presentment we have of it, the 'Athanasian' symbol. Indeed, in the light of all we now know of personality, the question rather is whether it is possible to hold belief in a personal God in any intelligible sense without this triune conception. Even the Hebrew mind, established as it was in the unity of God, felt after some kind of plurality within the unity as a necessity of thought—witness the plural name, *Elohim*. If self-conscious personality implies for us a 'subject,' an 'object,' and a relation between subject and object, is not the triune conception of the Divine Life necessary to any personal idea of God? Is it not a fact inviting the closest consideration that the religion of Christ, to which we owe our very idea of human personality, should have also given us a conception of the Divine which seems exactly to meet the philosophical situation it has created?

But the Christian doctrine of God is very much more than an intellectual proposition. It meets the fundamental need of the heart. Most people seek God, not as a philosophical necessity, but from a longing to know whether the Being Who is responsible for our existence is One Who loves and cares for His creatures. Now, the distinctive message of Christianity is that God is love—*i.e.*, that love is the very essence of His Being. But how is love thinkable without an object to love, and, in this case, an Eternal Object? The Christian answer to this profound question lies in the triune conception of God. Ever, in the limitless abyss which the finite mind can never traverse, but must forever view, God is love because God is beloved; and the Love expresses the relationship between the Love and the

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Beloved. In other words, Love is eternal because God is a Society.

It is this that saves the Christian doctrine of God from being a metaphysical abstraction removed from the practical life of every day. If we ask ourselves what is our supreme need to-day in order to 'carry on' in the task of reconstruction and restoration, is it not a *sanction*, final, transcendent, unquestionable, that love is the law of our life? The ideal of democracy, that of mutual forbearance and sacrifice—the logical correlative of mutual benefit—demands some tremendous guarantee that sacrifice is not loss. Where shall we find that guarantee? What is to curb that 'will of self' which, proportionately to its strength, overthrows its fellows? What is to steel our endurance against the daily test which home-life and our industrial and social relationships impose upon us? The man or woman who does not feel this to be a problem—nay, *the* problem—is either living far away from modern life or else is deficient in human nature. Why should I not take my own way to the utmost of my power, and drive my chariot to a place in the sun in ruthless disregard of the intervening crowd? It is impossible in a matter so close to one's dearest instincts to find resting-place in sentiment or copybook maxims. What we need is a social sanction which is transcendent and eternal.

If there is nothing in the universe but impersonal force, then anarchy may be more 'rational' than social order and justice. If God is solitary, then despotism and individualism may be the Divine type with which to conform. Alone the fact of a personal and triune God exalts service and vindicates sacrifice, because it eternalizes Love. St. Gregory of Nyssa, when asked how he had converted his episcopal city, replied: 'By preaching the doctrine of the Trinity.'

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BOOKS RECOMMENDED

The books recommended at the end of each section are selected on account of their dealing with quite modern difficulties about Christian teaching.

Gore, Bishop : *Belief in God*. Murray.

Gore, Bishop : *The New Theology and the Old Religion*, especially chap. iii. Murray.

Temple, Bishop : *The Nature of Personality*. Macmillan.

Temple, Bishop : *The Universality of Christ*, Lectures I. and II. S.C.M.

Illingworth, Dr. J. R. : *Personality, Human and Divine*. Macmillan.

Illingworth, Dr. J. R. : *Divine Immanence*. Macmillan.

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Joyce, Dr. G. C. : *God* (Modern Oxford Tracts). Longmans.

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II

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF MIRACLE?

IN placing miracle in the forefront of these pages I am aware that I run the risk of being voted a 'back number.' Miracle, I shall be told, is quite out of line with the present character of thought, and religion cannot hope for recognition as a factor in real life unless it is divested of miraculous events.

To this I reply that miracle is a much bigger question than merely the acceptance or rejection of certain alleged events. It is part of the issue between freedom and necessity, between a mechanical conception of the universe and belief in a personal control. If 'miracles do not happen' because they *cannot*, if those occurrences which have hitherto betokened personal control only await the advance of knowledge to fall into line with mechanical sequences, then there is plainly an end to all belief in free volition, and what used to be called 'scientific fatalism' is triumphant all along the line. In that case, Kirchhoff's dictum—that 'there is only one science, that of mechanics'—will apply all round, in the sphere of ethics no less than in that of physics. Is there anyone who will consistently undertake all the implications of such a position?

If, on the other hand, we believe in human freedom, why should we deny in the universe that which we assume in our own actions? Are we to consider the human race as the sole exception to universal invariability?—even so the 'invariability' ceases to be, and we ourselves become the miracle which we declare does not happen!

Viewed in this light I think it will be conceded that the subject of miracle has not yet been satisfactorily dismissed. As a matter of fact, the subject is so far fundamental, not only to Christianity but to Theism, not only to Theism but to belief in ourselves as personal beings, that my only hesitation was whether I should give it the second or the first place in these pages.

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I

If, however, miracle is an indication of personal freedom, a guarantee of personal control in the universe, it can no longer be the obstacle to faith which so many regard it as being. The obstacle to faith is the haunting suspicion that there are *no* miracles!—that all things are part of an order so entirely mechanical that there is no room in the universe for anything like personal volition. If, as most of us now suspect, the ultimate debate is destined to be between freedom and necessity, it is at once evident that miracle is practically decisive. Miracle, therefore, is an asset, not, as a certain class of apologists seem to feel, an encumbrance—an asset, not because it invests its subjects with magical authority, but as an indication of that personal freedom which is the basis of all religion. Hence those who offer us Christianity *minus* miracle simply do not meet the intellectual situation. Miracle is not the difficulty. The difficulty is the other way. If ‘miracles do not happen,’ the presumption is they cannot happen; and if they cannot happen, then free personal volition is a delusion. In that case the battle is over, and religion, which from first to last appeals to personal freedom and expresses faith in personal freedom, disappears from the field of practical life.

This, however, is an alternative which we have no reason at present to anticipate. As a matter of fact, the trend of scientific thought is rather in the opposite direction. The day has already gone by when Kirchhoff could say, confident of his audience, ‘There is only one science, that of mechanics.’ All that old order of objection to miracle on the score of the ‘uniformity of nature’ and the rigidity of her laws—the scientific dogmatism that assumed such a reign of terror in the latter half of the nineteenth century—has clean passed away—at any rate, from the face of science. The mechanical conception of nature is, in fact, broken up. ‘Biology has presented it with facts for which it has no categories. Selection is a principle of life

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which no science of mere mechanical reaction can handle. Organic continuity is a matter which no science of mere juxtaposition can explain.* The recently observed skidding of light, associated with the name of Einstein, seems to substantiate the doubts expressed by Planck and Bohr as to the universality of the Newtonian laws. The impression left upon our minds by the foremost exponents of physical science—Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Barrett, Dr. MacDougall, Dr. Norman Campbell, and others—is that the universe may best be understood as the expression of some great personal volition and control.

This remarkable change in the attitude of science since the days of Clifford and Tyndall does not suggest a world of caprice—in which case anything like ‘science’ would, of course, be impossible—but it does suggest that the ‘order of nature’ is contingent upon the vaster ‘order’ of personal intelligence. (I crave pardon for the redundancy on the score of seeking clearest expression for the hypothesis suggested.) Take a simple illustration: I have a friend with whom I am so well acquainted that I seem able to foresee exactly what he will say or do under certain conditions. All his actions, I say, are so characteristic—*i.e.*, they agree entirely with what I know of him. But there comes a day when he does something—it may be a deed of heroism, or it may be the reverse—which I confess to be beyond anything I could have believed of him. ‘It is so unlike him!’ I say, meaning: it is so unlike *what I know* of him. To me it comes as a ‘revelation’; yet it is just part of his personality, appearing for the first time in my experience.

Now, the modern scientific outlook, the degree of expectancy with which we approach nature and her mysteries, always demands some such margin of contingency. This does not mean anything *unnatural*, in the sense of ‘contrary to nature,’ for the unexpected happens within nature, and is compact of the very phenomena which hitherto have presented themselves

* Dr. H. Scott-Holland, *Creeds and Critics*, p. 141.

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to us in a different order. Natural forces react and counteract among themselves until it is extremely doubtful whether there is any advantage in retaining the term 'uniformity of nature' at all. Not only so, but human will can interfere with these sequences. When I throw a stone into the air I do not infringe the 'order of nature' or violate the law of gravitation. I bring in a new force, and thereby counteract the tendency of other forces. And the human will is always doing this. It is a condition of our very existence. Man is the diplomatist of nature, and maintains a precarious footing by means of successful diplomacy. But in so doing he does not regard himself as acting 'contrary to nature' or engaged in violating nature's 'laws.'

Now, the Christian, in believing in miracle, only extends to a Divine Personality the freedom which he himself exercises, and which he sees to be exercised apart from himself. The analogy from man's act to God's act would seem to be complete. I am not, of course, claiming the imprimatur of science for this conception. That would be too much. But I do claim that the modern scientific outlook leaves room for this conception. And this one feels to be a real advance since the day when 'a tightly closed system of natural law, absolutely complete, self-determined, self-sufficient, self-explanatory, with iron limits fixed by rigid necessities of causation,' ruled out miracle as antecedently incredible. And, further, not only do these reflections suggest a harmony between miracle and scientific observation, but I claim they also bring miracle into line with that conception of it which obtained as soon as the mind of Christianity set to work on experience.

For notwithstanding the crude ideas of miracle which excited the opposition of Hume and later critics, really representative Christian thought has never regarded miracle as a violation of the order of nature, or as something *contra naturam*. Nothing could be clearer than the words of St. Augustine: 'We call those things

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'miracles' which God does out of the usual course of nature, *as known to us.*'* And, again: 'According to human usage, things are said to be against nature which are only against the course of nature *as known to us.*'† Six hundred years later Aquinas adheres to precisely the same conception: 'Those events are properly to be styled 'miraculous' which happen by Divine power beyond the order *commonly observed* in nature.'‡ Miracle, then, in the light of this conception is not a violation of the order of nature, but a change in the order *as observed by us*—quite a different thing. With such a conception modern science has no quarrel, provided, of course, the evidence for such occurrences is satisfactory, a proviso we shall consider presently. Science may decline to refer such occurrences to the Cause assigned by Augustine and Aquinas—that, again, is a matter to which we will return in a moment—but that 'uniformity' is hypothetical, that 'laws' are statements open to revision, that there are multitudes of isolated facts irreducible to any sequence of cause and effect, science knows perfectly well, since her every onward step necessitates revision, and every application of knowledge illustrates anew the power of man to adapt 'nature' to his ends.

Placing together these two things—the original meaning of miracle and the present attitude of science—it does seem remarkable that the only people who still maintain the 'antecedent incredibility' of miracles should be Christians themselves! We are prepared to find the idea in the 'Rationalist Reprints,' which, as the name signifies, are 'back numbers'; we expect to encounter it in Hyde Park, for Hyde Park is the rendezvous of revenants where the ghosts of dead controversies gibber; but to find Modern (or Modernist) Churchmen taking up a position discarded by science, and rejecting both miracles and their evidence on the assumption that they 'do not happen,' is certainly amazing! What is scarcely less amazing is their ap-

* *De Civitate Dei*, XXI. iii. † *Contra Faustum*, XXVI. iii.

‡ *Contra Gentiles*, III. ci.

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parent ignorance of standard Christian thought. Thus we have had Dr. Sanday generously allowing us such miracles as are not *contra naturam*.^{*} But what miracles are *contra naturam*? I need not recapitulate what has been said above. It is of the essence of Christian faith in miracles that they are not 'contrary to nature.' The Rev. J. M. Thompson has supplied us—on the Hyde Park basis of the impossibility of miracle—with an extraordinary kind of Christianity of which the Central Figure is not even free from sin![†] Such examples of the way in which Christianity is misunderstood by some of its most trusted servants challenge our attention, lest those who are attracted by them should mistake them for a new and enlightened kind of Christianity. Having, however, drawn attention to the fallacy on which they rest, we may leave them to the fate of an obsolete tradition. Their position is sufficiently indicated in Dr. Scott Holland's observation on Dr. Hensley Henson, when the latter applied the results of 'science and criticism' to Christ. 'It is interesting to note,' observed Dr. Holland, 'that these two trends—i.e., science and criticism as employed by Dr. Henson—have just exhausted their momentum and have become obsolete together.'[‡]

^{*} *Bishop Gore's Challenge to Criticism: A Reply to the Bishop of Oxford's Open Letter on the Basis of Anglican Fellowship*. Longmans.

[†] *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1919. In 1911 Mr. Thompson began by getting rid of miracle because of the alleged sensitiveness of the modern mind on the subject. His position then, to quote his own words, was as follows: 'Though no miracles accompanied Christ's entry into, or presence in, or departure from, the world; though He did not think or speak or act otherwise than as a man; though He yields nothing to modern analysis but human elements; yet in Jesus Christ God is incarnate' (*Miracles in the New Testament*). His position thus conserved the 'moral miracle' of a sinless Christ. In January, 1919, Mr. Thompson evacuated that position also. In the *Hibbert* article above referred to he points out to his fellow Modernists that a sinless Christ is quite as much a 'miracle' as a Christ who stills the storm and raises the dead, and therefore, *because all miracle is incredible*, Christ's sinlessness is incredible!

[‡] *Trends in Science and Criticism*, reprinted in *Creeds and Critics*.

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2

Another misunderstanding about miracles is that they all belong to the past. 'The age of miracles is past'; 'we no longer live in the age of miracles'—what modern novel does not contain *dicta* like these? And serious people, with their eyes wide open, acquiesce. Many Christians even go to the length of believing that miracles were confined to the introduction of Christianity—as a sort of advertisement, one would suppose; and then, when Christianity had obtained a hold on the public, the advertisement was withdrawn! Thus the subject of miracle becomes invested with a faint antiquarian interest centuries removed from modern life.

As a matter of fact, miracles *are* happening to-day. Every authenticated answer to prayer is a miracle within the meaning of the word indicated above. Such 'answers' argue a personal control over events. And while it is true that we do not pray merely to get what we want, it is also true that prayer presupposes a Personal Control beyond ourselves. It is the appeal of the soul to One Who is all-sovereign. Any one who seriously believed that 'we no longer live in the age of miracle' would have to give up the use of the Lord's Prayer. If there be no free personal control in the universe, prayer is absurd; if there is personal control, miracles happen.

But there are also notorious miracles, publicly performed and recorded, such, *e.g.*, as those at Lourdes. No one who has sifted the published evidence of thousands of cases of cures at Lourdes can believe that they can be 'explained' by ordinary processes of nature. Bernheim, head of the famous school of 'suggestion' at Nancy, devotes twenty pages of his book* to a denial of any 'natural' hypothesis to cover these cures. The *Annales des Sciences Physiques*, a sceptical review

* *Hypnotisme, Suggestion, Psychothérapie*. Paris, 1903. Second edition.

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whose editor is Dr. Richet, Professor at the Medical Faculty of Paris, said in the course of an exhaustive article: 'Unprejudiced minds cannot but be convinced that the facts stated are authentic.' At Lourdes the *Bureau des Constatations* stands near the shrine, and there are recorded and checked the certificates of maladies, and also the certificates of cure; it is free to all physicians, whatever their nationality or religious belief. Every case of cure, together with the 'history' of the malady, is open to the completest investigation. Between two and three hundred doctors visit this extraordinary clinic every year. No one interested in the subject of miracle can afford to pass over Dr. Georges Bertrin's work on the subject.* He proves conclusively that no 'natural' explanation yet advanced for the phenomena recorded has been sustained.

Miracles, then, are not confined to past history, to lie at the mercy of academic dissection at the hands of those who talk about a credulous age, and dogmatize on 'the impossibility of supernatural realities taking sensible impressions.'† While they are weaving their theories by the light of the study lamp, here, out in the open, the very things are happening which Modernist subtleties disallow! The whole thing is purely a question of *evidence*. Huxley, with his keen insight and fine impartiality, dismissed the whole case against miracle as based on preconceived notions.‡ He held that miracle is a question of evidence pure and simple, and that any fact, if its occurrence can be established by evidence, must be accepted, no matter how 'exceptional' its nature may be.

We sift the evidence. We submit it to as rigorous a test as we can. If it satisfies that test, if it appears to be trustworthy, we are bound to accept the occurrences to which it testifies, whether they belong to the past or the present, whether they are encountered in Christian

* *Histoire Critique des Événements de Lourdes*. Paris, 1909. There is an English translation by Dr. Gibbs.

† E.g., Edward Grubb, *The Religion of Experience*, vii., ix.

‡ *Some Controverted Questions*, p. 209; *Life of Hume*, p. 132.

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history or in the scientific investigation of nature. They are not 'contrary to nature,' for they have happened. They are not 'contrary to experience,' for they have been observed. They may be altogether 'out of the picture' which ordinary experience presents to us. That does not matter in the least. The evidence says they have happened, and there they are.

Here, however, we have to make a distinction. Between the 'miracles of science'—the 'isolated events' recorded in the observation of nature—and the miracles of Christian history there is this difference: the scientist fully expects his 'miracles' will admit of explanation—*i.e.*, that with the advance of knowledge they will fall into line with ordinary sequences of cause and effect. The Christian believer, on the other hand, does not expect the miracles on which his religion rests ever to take a place in the 'observed order of nature.' He does not prophesy with Matthew Arnold that 'all Bible miracles'—nor all the present miracles of the Church—'will disappear with the advance of science,'* nor assert, with Professor Cooper, that 'the miracles of one age become the ordinary working of the next!'+ He believes miracles are part of the *universal* order, but he does not believe that all the factors in that order will ever be disclosed in the *scientific* order, because they are volitions of a personal Power. They 'happen' in accordance with a Purpose which is not part of the ordinary course of nature. This is not denying their causation, nor lifting them out of the 'order of nature' into some sphere *contra naturam*. As Dr. Scott Holland well says: 'The very idea of a "miracle," as of argumentative value, depends on its being the effect of an adequate and reasonable cause. It has a "nature" in accordance with which it has happened. Otherwise it would convey nothing to us. It would not be able to show cause why it had occurred. It would be useless and futile, a mere freak, from which no conclusions of any kind could be drawn. The

* *Literature and Dogma*.

† *Reformed Church Review*, July, 1900.

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argument from "miracle" must always be an appeal to reason.*

The above distinction is not a popular one to-day. Those who hold it must be prepared to please neither party—neither science, which is prepared to accept miracle on the evidence, *pending* its solution in the smoothly running currents of cause and effect; nor those modern theologians who, in the temper of the Introduction to *Foundations*, strive to establish a *modus vivendi* with science. It is, however, a distinction of the utmost importance if the function of miracle is what we are here considering it to be—the index of personal freedom in the universe. For, obviously, if we regard all miracles as merely awaiting reduction to a mechanical order, we have capitulated to the idea that the universe is mechanical throughout. The bare idea, therefore, that miracles will ultimately be 'explained' is equivalent to accepting Necessity.

Is there any ground for such an expectation? Has science, in the amazing progress made during the past hundred years, given us any indication that what the Christian regards as 'miracles' are on their way to being co-ordinated? The only line at all suggesting such an issue is the advance recently made in the direction of healing by suggestion. In the light of this advance, do the Christian miracles of healing come under ordinary psychological laws? Harnack, J. M. Thompson, and others, appear to think so. On the other hand, a medical authority, Dr. R. J. Ryle, has examined this position, and shown good reasons against believing that the miracles of Christ can be accounted for on psychological principles.† So far as one can gather, cases of healing in our own day by means of psychotherapy are confined to functional disorders or to cases doubtfully organic. Now, the greater part of the miracles of healing attributed to Christ in the Gospels—as well as to His Apostles after Him—

* *Creeds and Critics*, p. 143.

† *The Hibbert Journal*, April, 1907: 'The Neurotic Theory of the Miracles of Healing.'

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are those affecting organic disturbance—an entirely different thing. We have yet to learn that psychotherapy can restore sight in the totally blind, or cure deafness of 'the middle ear,' or restore the dead to life.

It may, perhaps, be objected that if modern psychology has gone so far in this matter of healing there may be reasonable presumption that it is destined to go further until it reproduces the miracles of Christ. The objection is robbed of whatever force it might have by the fact that modern psychological method only registers a relative advance. It is to a very large extent only the recovery of a lost art. Psychotherapy was known and practised amongst the ancients far more successfully on neurotic disorders than it is to-day.

No other department of modern knowledge offers even apparent competition with the miracles of Christ. Harnack and J. M. Thompson clearly show this by their dismissing the 'nature-miracles' as fabulous. To dismiss as fabulous what cannot be explained is, of course, from a scientific point of view, simply childish, and the attitude has been sufficiently considered above; but it does indicate a despair of 'explanation' which is not without its value. The feeding of the multitudes, the calming of the storm, the raising of the dead—these things would not be banished to the limbo of legend if there were a reasonable prospect of science being able to reproduce them. There is no ground for believing that any of the miracles of Christ fall into line with scientific formulæ. There is no ground for expecting them to do so. They remain, so far as 'the ordinary course of nature' is concerned, isolated occurrences. To the Christian believer they are not isolated occurrences, because he ascribes them to the personal volition of Christ, either exerted directly or through His Apostles.

To the Christian believer these miracles occasion no surprise, because for him the Miracle of miracles is Christ Himself. He regards them from the standpoint of adequacy. As he feels the supremely great statesman or General will handle situations and solve

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problems and change the course of events and 'make history'; as he knows that even he himself can, by the application of knowledge and skill unknown to his forefathers modify the course of nature, so he sees in Christ a volition and a purpose to which all his observations of nature are inadequate. Nor is this belief a question-begging—no more so than when Adams and Leverier inferred the existence of the planet Neptune from certain otherwise inexplicable phenomena in that part of the heavens. It is simply an application of the principle of sufficient cause. Were we to reject this 'cause,' we should not get rid of the miracles that evoke it. They would still remain, as they do for the unbeliever, isolated occurrences devoid of meaning. Our faith in Christ does precisely what the principle of sufficient cause does for the man of science—it brings into ordered sequence acts otherwise unaccountable.

Moreover, the believer finds the verification of the miraculous in his own spiritual experience of Christ. The theory 'works.' The Apostle speaks of 'knowing the power of His resurrection.' The Christian miracles are not set before us as 'prodigies' to blind the judgment and coerce belief; they are 'signs' and 'powers'* affording a glimpse of a Personal God. Their verification stands in facts of a spiritual order. Now, if miracle be referable to personal—*i.e.*, spiritual—control, the position upheld in the foregoing pages, is it not logically fitting that its verification should take place in the spiritual sphere?

Let us say, then, that by a 'miracle' we understand a well-authenticated departure from 'the *observed* course of nature' for which there is no explanation other than the personal act of God. This is not to 'define' miracle, which it would be premature to attempt in a day when knowledge is in a state of formative suspense; it is sufficient to guard the word against

* The reader is reminded of the three words used for miracles in the gospel history: *δύναμις* (generally in plural) is a putting forth of Divine power; *τέρας* is a prodigy, a wonderful act (also in plural, and joined with the other expressions); *σημεῖον*, a sign, authenticating Christ's mission, and symbolizing spiritual truths.

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two misconceptions : (1) that miracle is a 'violation' of nature ; (2) that it is likely to be reducible to scientific formulæ. We mean by miracle the extension to God of the same freedom which we ourselves experience in the modification of natural forces.

3

In this respect miracle lights up the Christian's whole conception of nature. So far from incurring a dualism which banishes God from the world, it is his glimpse of a personal God within the world. It prompts him to regard all nature as the abode and manifestation of free volition, some of it calculable and reproducible by man, some not ; all of it the operation of personal control and vital with intelligent Purpose. It also confirms his own instinctive belief—a belief which Bergson confesses to be beyond analysis—that he is himself 'free.' Henceforth to get into touch with, to move at one with this supreme personal volition, is the true object of his life. He is obliged to admit that he has not yet achieved this, neither, apparently, has the human race as a whole, since all around him he sees evidences of what he feels within himself, the *malaise* of a disordered will. Here, too, is something in its kind miraculous, a departure from the ideal norm, which might well be called a miracle of evil.

It is indisputable that Christianity took its rise in belief in a miracle. Previous to His death, the disciples had known Christ as a Master, as a Friend. There were moments of exalted faith when they acknowledged Him to be the expected Deliverer* of prophecy, moments when they even transcended the national content of this hope.† Yet the tragedy of His death, though it could not destroy their love, completely overthrew their belief. 'We hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel,‡' but Calvary dissipated that hope. This despair was reversed by the Resurrection. By this is meant a physical resurrection. There can be no sort of doubt from the evidences

* John i. 41, 49 ; vi. 68 f. † Matt. xvi. 16. ‡ Luke xxiv. 12.

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in the Gospels and the references in Acts and the Epistles that those who claimed to be witnesses of the risen Christ understood Him to have risen in the same body in which He had died and was buried, only transmuted into a higher state and power.* Their language describes what can only have been a physical occurrence. No apparition, no 'materialization,' could possibly satisfy the language they use. Now, what did this physical event portend? This, at least, that the Divine Power which created and sustains the world was on the side of the Crucified. Such, no doubt, was the sensation that shattered their despair, such the first phase of reanimated faith. While, however, this would account for their change of attitude towards the death of their Master, it could scarcely account for the transformation of their whole life. Converse with the risen Lord, and especially His penetration of their inmost being by the Spirit, wrought in them a 'newness of life,' both setting free within them and imparting to them spiritual energies of a resurrection quality. And the fact that their new life of witness was immediately accompanied by physical miracle seems to indicate that 'verification' was not to be limited to spiritual experience, but that 'in Christ' human life was passing altogether under Divine control.

Meanwhile the more they committed themselves to this new experience, the more inevitable became reflection on the Life that had been lived amongst them when as yet they were unacquainted with its true values. The work, the teaching, the suffering, the death of Christ leapt into a new significance like invisible writing held to flame. The absolute authority with which He taught, His sinlessness, the mastery over nature with which He had previously impressed them, were all transfigured in the white light of a new experience. This prepared them to receive certain

* See critical discussion of evidence in Dr. Sparrow Simpson, *The Resurrection; Our Lord's Resurrection* (Longmans); Dr. Swete, *The Appearances of Our Lord after the Passion* (Macmillan); and especially Dr. Nolloth, *The Rise of the Christian Religion*, chap. xx.

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facts about His Birth and the events preceding it when the time came for their disclosure. 'The eyes of their understanding were enlightened.' To believe the Resurrection was to accept the Incarnation. The disclosure of the Virgin Birth corresponded exactly with what they already perceived of His Personality. This is not to say the thought was father to the fact; but fact prepared the way for fact. There is nothing more truly scientific in spirit than the way in which faith *in* Christ prepared for faith *about* Him. Once the Resurrection and its phenomena had opened their eyes by facts irresistible as their own existence, they perceived they lived and moved and had their being in a realm of personal freedom—a realm which they were always striving to express in the inadequate vocabulary borrowed from the sense-life. They claimed to possess already an 'eternal life,' they spoke of dwelling with Christ 'in heavenly places,' of being 'translated into the kingdom of' God's 'dear Son.' The world's vocabulary was ransacked, words were wrenched out of their sensuous orbit, paradox was heaped on paradox in the endeavour to clothe, to 'incarnate,' this new mentality, this experience of the inner reality of things apparent. And wonderfully they succeeded. For the deepest things of human life leapt up, and, in Plato's phrase, 'saluted the truth.' They knew, and sowed the knowledge far and wide, that the personal force disclosed in the Resurrection was the true element of man's life, the fulness of a life of communion with a personal God. The conviction sent them everywhere proclaiming the knowledge at the risk, and ultimately at the cost, of their own lives, though with a success which no other proclamation has ever realized. If they 'counted not their lives dear unto' them, it was because they knew that their 'life was hid with Christ in God.'

And miracle holds exactly the same place in our faith to-day as it did in the splendours of that spiritual dawn. We are of those who have 'believed through their word.' We base our belief in their witness, which has

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never been overthrown. Yet not entirely so, for the verification of it lives and triumphs in our own experience. Like the tree which draws nourishment equally from soil and air, so the faith rooted in historic fact feeds and basks and gathers colour and individuality in the great spaces of present experience. Knowing what we do of the power of God in ourselves, we refuse all lesser words than 'miracle' to express the marvel of the Christ-control.

And this verification lies within the reach of all. The venture made, the miracle is here. Love is incarnate, not merely historical. The past is present, for the essence of miracle is a timeless condition. That which is man's glimpse of a personal God becomes the steadfast and enduring vision.

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III

WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY SIN ?

THE amazing thing about the Resurrection of Christ is that its immediate effect was not on thought, but on character. This fact does not seem to have received adequate attention either from sceptic or apologist. The cry evoked by the event was not, 'What must we *think*?' but 'What must we *do*?' This, on the face of it, is altogether puzzling. That a resurrection should have a profound interest for the philosopher goes without saying; that it should immediately lead to a transformation of life leaves us wondering. Evidently there is a hiatus somewhere. If the event were to happen to-day it is fairly certain the Press would teem with articles; it is not so certain the churches would swarm with penitents. Happening when it did, we should have expected the Resurrection to issue in a political reaction. As the Crucifixion-cry had been, 'Not this Man, but Cæsar !' so the Resurrection-cry should have been, 'Not Cæsar, but Christ !' If the construction of history were in our own hands, this is undoubtedly the course reason would have dictated. Or, to put it a little differently, if the Resurrection had been fiction, probably nothing would have happened, or, if anything, it would have been a rising against Roman power. The vindication of the Master would have meant for His followers the vindication of His 'kingdom'—as they understood it. What history actually discloses, however, is nothing of the kind. The reaction set up by the Resurrection was neither—at first—intellectual nor political: it was entirely moral.

True, the event subsequently gave rise to a new interpretation of life and a philosophy of human personality which remains to be reckoned with to-day. This, however, the resurrection effected only through

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the *moral* nature. Its immediate impact was on character. Paley, dull as we often reckon him to be, had his inspired moments, if the inspiration were only excessive common sense, and one of these was when he tested the truth of the Resurrection by the fact that those who believed it at once 'submitted their lives to new rules of conduct.'

'If Christ be not raised, ye are yet in your sins'*—thus the most unwilling of believers states the true significance of the event. But what was the connection? This: supremacy over death carried with it supremacy over life. That life—the human life that responded to the miracle—was consciously disordered, maimed and miserable; it needed pardon, renewal and power. And these it found in spiritual contact with One Who had shown Himself to be 'the Resurrection and the Life.' Hence the same witness could confess: 'The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and of death.' It was not merely a case of 'submitting to new rules of conduct,' but of submitting to a new *Control*, so that the personal power which issued in the Resurrection, and whereof the Resurrection was proof, might also issue in 'newness of life'—a veritable resurrection, a release from death because a release from sin.

Sin, then, is the dark background against which the Resurrection, and all the Resurrection promises for mankind, stands out in high relief. Consequently it was a realization of sin that gave the Resurrection its spiritual impact at the first, and consequently if the significance of the Resurrection is ever to be realized it can only be out of the depths of that condition known as 'conviction of sin.'

We are still awaiting a Life of Christ which shall give adequate position to the work of the Baptist. It is only to be expected that 'the supreme Figure of history' should absorb the student's interest to the exclusion of the great prelude in the condition of the

* 1 Cor. xv. 17.

† Rom. viii. 2.

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people amongst whom Christ appeared. At the same time, very much in the ministry of Christ, and much more in the success which accompanied the Apostles after Pentecost, is only made intelligible for us by the religious revival under John. Of recent years our attention has been concentrated far too much on the eschatological literature preceding the appearance of Christ. The true historic setting for the 'origins' of Christianity is the moral condition of the people of Palestine when Christ appeared. Over the entire populace the preaching of John had swept like the thunders of a second Sinai. It penetrated every class. Men were stirred to the depths. They saw sin as an appalling gulf separating them from the holy God. From every heart arose the cry : 'What shall we do?''* It is significant that the cry raised at Pentecost should be the same as that which responded to John's preaching.† Christ appeared in the midst of a people experiencing the agony of religious revival without its deliverance and joy. Throughout His whole work and teaching He assumes this sense of guilt. True, He never defines sin, nor does He discourse of it in the abstract. He had no need. It was there, felt, acknowledged, detested. His parables assume it. It underlies His ministry of forgiveness, and that committed to His Apostles.‡ The only persons for whom He seems to have been able to do nothing, of whom, indeed, He seems to have despaired, were the few who remained in conscious integrity high above the flood of this conviction.§ They lost their chance of Him and of the Life He came to open up simply because in their own estimation they were 'whole,' they were 'righteous.' They had no sense of sin.

It was, then, to this deep conviction of sin that Christ appealed, and without which the work He accomplished is unintelligible. And it was this which gave the Resurrection its true significance. The Divine vindication

* Luke iii. 10 *ff.*

† Acts ii. 37.

‡ Matt. xviii. 18 ; John xx. 21-23.

§ Matt. ix. 12 ; xxiii. 28 *ff.* ; Luke v. 32 ; xviii. 9 *ff.*

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of the Absolver thrilled men with a new hope proportionate to their self-despair. Hence it was that while a whole new vision of human personality rose from the tomb with Christ, it was not this on which the beholder's gaze at first was fixed; it was the possibility of being 'renewed in righteousness and true holiness.' Hence it was that the old political 'kingdom' became a thing forgotten in the Kingdom which is 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,' and the reign of God was realized in 'newness of life,' in ceasing from sin, in being made 'alive unto God.'

I

Where to-day is this conviction of sin? On the one hand, the more considerable sort of our literature affords us every shade and degree of 'making light' of sin. On the other hand, we have one of the keenest observers of the age, a man of transparent sincerity, of vast learning, with a passion for 'social justice,' telling us that it is his 'persuasion, which deepens with every year of experience, that there will be no revival of vital religion amongst us, on any large scale, or with any adequate results, except through the deepening of the sense of sin.'*

Moral evil we acknowledge. We cannot shut our eyes to it. It is the common fact of everyday life. Everywhere it haunts us like our shadow. It is the shadow of life. We may deny the *doctrine* of sin; we cannot deny the *fact* of sin. To be aware of moral evil, however, is not the same thing as to be aware of sin. Moral evil was recognized by the pagan world very much as it is in England to-day. Sin—the doctrine and treatment of it—is essentially Christian, if we may extend the word to include the earlier revelation in Hebrew religion. Sin is the interpretation which Christianity places on moral evil. It is moral evil tracked down to its seat in the will, first, of the human race, and then, with varying degrees of accountability,

* Dr. Gore, Oxford University Sermon, December 13, 1903.

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to the will of the individual as an integral part of the race. This 'localization' of sin, so to speak, is the first thing we have to grasp if we would understand what Christianity means by sin. Its seat is in the will.

This diagnosis Christianity derived from Christ's own treatment of sinners. To their sin Christ opposed love—love of Himself. Now, love, in the Christian sense, in the sense in which Christ and His Apostles lifted it out of the degraded pagan sense of 'desire,' is essentially a function of the will. Therefore that which it is to overcome, to cast out, also has its seat in the will. Hence sin is no mere survival of animal ancestry, having its seat in desire, and requiring to be worked off by rigorous asceticism and a concentration on the intellectual life. Nor is it a product merely of ignorance, to be dispelled by knowledge and 'education.' Both these things, lust—including in that term all desires of which self is the object—and ignorance, are the *result* of sin, but sin itself is something far more deeply seated; it is a disorder of the very principle that makes us human, that 'unanalyzable' principle, according to Bergson, which is the mainspring of our human life.

And in what does this disorder of the will consist? Let us put it quite simply, apart from theological terminology. It consists in our wills being self-centred, instead of being God-centred. We are at odds with God. That, according to Christianity, is the root of the whole trouble. Sometime or other, somehow or other—into the origin we are not now concerned to enter, for the origin can make little difference to the fact—there occurred this deep spiritual lesion between God and His creature. That such a lesion should immediately result in discord in the human family is exactly what we should deduce. The organism, out of touch with its environment, becomes disordered in itself. The will, self-centred, is pursued in disregard of, and in violation of, the welfare of others. The condition is equally one of disintegration whether it take the form of actual injury or 'armed neutrality.'

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It may be confined to the individual and may smoulder in his breast, imprisoned by social checks or counterbalancing motives; or it may break out into actual wrong, and extend to groups and nations. It may issue in domestic bitterness, in industrial and social injustice, or in a great war such as we have just come through. These ethical symptoms of the disorder at once occur to our minds, since they are intensely dramatic and are the kind of moral evil which is engaging our attention to-day, and to speak of 'sin' abstracted from these consequences is to invite the retort that religion is a thing of the 'schools,' divorced from life. But bearing in mind the burden of the world, no less is that burden, compared with its cause, superficial and symptomatic. The disorder can no more be adjusted on the surface than the symptoms of disease can be allayed unless the disease is itself successfully attacked. It is the displacement of the will from its centre in the Creator which is the source of the trouble, and all the problems awaiting solution are ultimately reducible to one—how to heal that lesion, how to re-experience the truth, *His Will is our peace*.

The Christian interpretation of 'sin,' then, is dominated by the fact of a personal Love Who 'made man for Himself,' and endowed him with this mysterious 'will' in order that he might be able consciously to love Him. These two facts together comprise the gist of the Christian doctrine of sin: (1) that it is resident in the will; (2) that, however manifested, it is exercised primarily against God, Whose claim over us as our Creator is absolute. The injury done to our fellow-man, serious as it is when measured by social consequences, is as nothing compared with the injury done to God as the Creator of our fellow-creatures. All men are His absolutely, therefore to sin against them or to sin against self can only be a secondary fault; the primary injury is against God.

There is, of course, much in the Christian doctrine of sin which cannot find place here, since the object of these pages is not so much 'instruction' as the removal

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of misunderstanding. Books dealing simply with the penitential aspect of the subject are easily procurable.* It is the widespread misunderstanding of the idea of sin itself which is the serious obstacle to deliverance from its power. Let us, then, examine some of these mistaken impressions, so that we may see more clearly what it is that Christianity does teach.

2

To begin with some of the commonest mistakes: There are still people who imagine that to accept the Christian teaching about sin is to stand committed to what is contemptuously called 'the story of the apple.' The doctrine of sin, however, carries with it no obligation to accept a crude and literal version of the story of the Fall. As long ago as the fourth century the Church regarded the third chapter of Genesis as offering us 'ideas in the form of narrative'†—i.e., as an allegory. The underlying fact is that of a 'Fall'—i.e., a lapse from communion with God. Singularly little use is made in Scripture of the 'story of the Fall,' but the *fact* of the lapse is consistently assumed throughout the Old and New Testaments. Does it at all concern us to know the precise circumstances under which this lapse, this 'primordial catastrophe,' as Newman calls it, took place? Surely it cannot be necessary for us to know the circumstances of sin's origin before we accept and act upon the Christian interpretation. We do not wait until we are satisfied as to the origin of disease before we consult the physician. Why should we adopt a line in spiritual matters which we never dream of taking in regard to our physical needs? Some glimpses of the mystery

* E.g., H. V. S. Eck's book on *Sin* in the Oxford Library of Theology (Longmans). Staley's *Practical Religion*, chap. vii. (Mowbrays). Bishop Webb's *Cure of Souls* (Mowbrays), though written for the use of the clergy, might profitably be studied generally. St. Francis de Sales' *Devout Life* contains all that a practising Christian needs to know.

† St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica*, 5.

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are afforded us—just sufficient to give coherence to the Christian interpretation of life. Yet here, as in other matters, we need to remember that Christianity is not put forward to meet our curiosity, but to satisfy our need and engage our practice.

Another commonly misunderstood expression is the 'Fall.' Again and again we are told by modern writers that it is nonsense to speak of a 'fall' when man has been rising all the time. Here, plainly, is a confusion of thought between man's physical and moral nature. Science inclines us to believe that man has been physically evolved. There is no reason why a Christian should not believe this, so long as he means by evolution a method of the Creator. We do well to remember that while 'evolution' seems to have come to stay, it is a hypothesis only. But, granted man has, physically, been 'rising all the time,' what about his moral and spiritual nature? It is to that that the term 'fall' is applied. If man did not lapse from a nobler state, he must always have been as he is now. That is a conception which, whatever may be our theory of his origin, carries with it insuperable difficulties, not only for our belief in the Christian message, but for our acceptance of any idea of moral order in the world. Besides, we see everywhere in the human race the vestiges of a more glorious and perfect past. What is the instinct to worship, what is the consciousness of God and the desire for Him, what is conscience and the tyranny of the ideal but the ruins of a spiritual temple once the abode of God? Now, the Christian teaching is that by whatever method God brought man's physical nature to perfection, He made him 'human' by giving him a soul created in His own image—*i.e.*, endowed with freedom, self-consciousness, and immortality; that He further added to this soul the gift of 'grace'—*i.e.*, of power to hold communion with Himself, to love and serve Him, and to find his everlasting happiness in so doing; that, tempted by a creature of a superior order who had previously fallen, man chose his own will, and by so doing forfeited, as

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he reasonably would, the grace or power which had held him at one with God.

Now, this teaching may, conceivably, be rejected. Though inherently reasonable, it is not the product of reasoning. It is, or it claims to be, the outcome of revelation. But the point here is : where in this teaching is there any opposition between the scientific hypothesis of evolution and the Christian doctrine of a 'fall'?

Again, we often hear it objected : 'If God is good and desired the happiness of His creature, why did He permit such a lapse? Why did He not make it impossible? Why did He not create man incapable of sin?' The answer is that in that case He would have created man incapable of freedom—that is, He would have created something entirely different from man. To make a free creature incapable of sin is a contradiction in terms.* The power of choice, in which freedom consists, without the possibility of making a wrong choice, would not be a power of choice at all. God has created many things incapable of sinning. They are all round us in the lowlier forms of existence. They cannot 'sin' because they are not free. They belong admittedly to a lower scale of existence than that of man. Man owes his superiority over them precisely to that quality of freedom the abuse of which has brought him to his present condition. Moreover, if one thing is clearer than another in revelation, it is that man had full knowledge of the consequences that would attend the abuse of the gift. Is God, then, responsible? Clearly not. Is the father responsible who places his son on his honour, and then finds he abuses the confidence?

A somewhat similar question is often raised as a difficulty : 'God must have foreknown that man would abuse His gift; was not man therefore obliged to do so?' A very little clear thinking will dispel this. For

* Nothing more lucid has been written on this point than the first sermon in the late Dr. Momerie's volume, *The Origin of Evil* (Blackwood and Sons).

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example, you foresee quite clearly that if your friend goes on in his extravagance he will fall into debt. Presently he does fall into debt, but he does not fall into debt *because* you foresaw it. In other words, your foresight does not make him fall into debt. Similarly, God's foreknowledge did not cause man to sin. He foresaw that man would freely do so.

But the question admits of being pressed beyond this superficial point, and urged to a much deeper issue: 'How could a good and loving God, foreseeing all the misery man would bring upon himself, ever create man at all?' That is a question very often on the lips of the Christian when he marvels, not so much at the misery of man, but at the injury done to God's honour. If raised in humility, it is a question calculated to increase our sense of the love and wisdom of God. For it must be remembered that the same revelation which lays bare the nature of sin gives us also the facts of redemption and restoration. The picture is not one of unrelieved ruin. Far from it. So far is human error from being irretrievable that St. Paul sees the wisdom and love of God in creating man vindicated in redemption.*

Another common misunderstanding is that of those who think that when Scripture says 'all men are *born* in sin,' and 'in sin did my mother conceive me,' some slur is cast on parental intercourse as a thing necessarily impure. One is astonished to find how widely prevalent this idea is even among educated people. But the plain meaning of Scripture is that man is born in sin, not because of his conception or birth, but because he is man. It simply means that all men come into the world inheriting the disordered will which is the root and cause of all after-sin.

'But what I don't understand,' says another objector, 'is why God should have punished all men for the sin of one man.' This objection seems to lie in a deficient idea of the unity of the race. May not the 'one man' of Genesis, and the 'Adam' spoken of by St.

* Eph. iii. 9-11.

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Paul, symbolize the unity of the race? The fact that sin is a disorder in which the whole race is implicated points to an origin in which the whole race participated. We have the very feeblest conception of the unity of the human race to-day. At best it is the biological unity of a species. What must be the implications of the interpenetration of a really corporate life, in which now rare phenomena like telepathy were the normal mode of intercourse, we can only dimly discern. If 'the first man, Adam,' stands for a group rather than an individual, the wreckage effected by its deflection from a true norm of life in God must have interpenetrated humanity to the last bound of time!

Nor is it so much a question of 'punishment' as of man incurring permanent disabilities. In fact, we have yet to get rid of the old *vindictive* idea of 'punishment,' for this conception utterly unfits us for a reasonable and organic view of the penalty of sin. The penalty of sin is not 'vindictive'; it is automatic. It was not God Who banished man from communion; it was man who banished himself.* The question of the justice of heredity is really answered by the unity of the race. Humanity is in reality one organism. If one member of this organism sin or suffer, the rest sin or suffer with him. And it should be remembered that this fact of unity, while capable of such terrible consequences when humanity departs from the law of its being, is also the very basis of social order and mutual service.

The question of heredity, however, is sometimes pressed in a more practical manner. How far, it is asked, can the sinner say of some fault in the direction of which he is hereditarily biased that it is owing to 'his own fault, his own most grievous fault'? The answer would seem to be (1) that conscience always brings home the actual commission of the offence to the individual will. Of course, in cases where the individual is coerced into sin, the sin is not his. The

* See on this the author's *Religious Instinct*, p. 182 ff. (Longmans).

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Church is quite clear as to this. Sin is that which is done amiss with the consent of the will. Of multitudes of men and women it holds true that they are 'more sinned against than sinning,' and there are certainly degrees of responsibility. Yet even in regard to those who are the 'victims' of some 'besetment,' does not experience show that there is always, at any rate in the early stages of the sin, a point at which the power of choice can be exercised? and it is in proportion as that power is wrongly exercised that the sinner has to confess the sin is committed 'by his own fault.' (2) Again, however handicapped I may be by the habits of those who lived before me, there is still a just sense in which I must take upon myself the responsibility, because I am an integral part of the human race. 'We have sinned with our fathers.' We are a part of them. The social bond reaches back into the past, as well as extending around us. This ought to need no emphasis in a day when we are recognizing more and more the 'solidarity of the race.' We cannot afford to forget that we are at one and the same time individuals and part of the whole human race, past as well as present. Our part in the race-present is the basis of our social obligations; our part in the race-past is the seat of our responsibility to God.

And this brings us to the last of these current misunderstandings and difficulties. One often finds people speaking in this way: 'I don't see how the injuries I do myself or my fellow-men can wrong God. Isn't there something unreal in all this talk about sin as "an offence against God"? If I have done anyone any harm, I am ready to make the best restitution in my power; and as to sins against myself, I must be ready to pay the penalty. But frankly, I feel that the language religion puts into one's mouth about sin against God is exaggerated and unreal.'

Does not this feeling—a very general one to-day—arise from a defective belief in God as Creator? If we were to damage the model, say, of some delicate and interesting invention, which should we injure more—

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the machine or the inventor? We may be pretty sure what the inventor would say! When we injure a fellow-creature, in his person or business or reputation, we wrong a thousand times more the God Who created and loves him. And the same holds good of those sins which we commit against ourselves. It holds good of many sins of which ordinary morality, the world's working code of ethics, takes no account at all. In fact, apart from God, the personal Creator, sin is only the violation of a social convention. And the insufficiency of all such humanitarian conceptions of sin lies in the fact that a social transgression can never bring about a spiritual despair.

Man is only 'justified'—in any sense in which the term may be employed—in proportion as his life is a response to the absolute and loving claim of God. Love for Love is the law of his life. This is why the reality of a personal God is of such inestimable significance for us. The very possibility of human progress centres in it. The highest conception man is capable of attaining both of himself and of human life, both here and forever, lies in acknowledging that 'it is He that hath made us, and we are *His*.'*

3

We have a right, when men reject the Christian doctrine of sin, to ask them what they propose to put in its place. But, indeed, there is little need to press the question, for the sceptic cannot, if he would, avoid the challenge of life's disorder. However much men might be content to leave sin an enigma, sin will not let them. We might remain agnostic as to the origin of the universe; we can't remain agnostic as to the mystery of sin, the personal issues at stake are too numerous and too insistent. Consequently, those who reject the *doctrine* are always seeking an explanation

* Ps. c. 3 (R.V.). It is greatly to be wished that the two chapters in Faber's *Creator and Creature* (Burns and Oates), 'What it is to be a Creature,' and 'What it is to have a Creator,' were better known.

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of the *fact*. Sir Oliver Lodge has airily told us that 'the higher man is not worrying about his sins.' Perhaps not. But the higher man is worrying very much about other people's. He is always on the scent of this human abnormality, and he never tracks it down. Those of us who have watched the whirligig of thought for the last thirty years will recollect the rise and fall in swift succession of substitutes for the Christian teaching about sin. There has been a perfect carnival of alternative theories—a sort of world's Shrove Tuesday gone mad! One after another we have watched them pass, acclaimed with shouts, bedflowered with sentiment, and banished to the dust-heaps of Charing Cross Road! There was the evolutionist explanation, that sin is merely a survival of animal ancestry. It didn't cover the facts. There were thousands of sins without a trace of the animal about them. There was the idea that sin was merely selfishness. That guess was fairly 'hot,' only it was not an explanation, for it left selfishness to be explained! Then we had the New Theology idea that sin was a necessity of human experience. That did not satisfy, for it threw the entire responsibility on God, and we felt that sooner than believe in a God Who made sin a *necessity* of progress, we should be better off without a God at all. Then we had the educationists—how remote it all seems now!—all prophesying the elimination of sin by means of 'the best that is thought and felt in the world.' They made a splendid display! Yet, alas! was it not the most highly educated nation in the world, the nation from which this panacea was largely derived, that threw morality to the winds, and bent its whole educated strength in the calamity of 1914?

And then, as the upheaval came rolling in upon the shores of civilization, in wave after wave of unspeakable horror and cruelty, we thought of the still, small voice in Birmingham Cathedral: 'Sin is not anything which civilization has a tendency to outgrow.'*

* Dr. Gore, *The New Theology*, etc., p. 72.

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No. There are just three facts that apply to all secularist attempts to explain sin :

1. They do not cover the facts ; therefore they are not explanations.
2. They have never carried conviction.
3. They hold out no hope of deliverance. The Christian doctrine of sin, on the other hand, is part and parcel of the gospel of salvation.

There is only one rival to the Christian doctrine of sin—viz., the belief that man cannot help his actions. Is there any man living who will bring up his child in that belief ?

In trying to relieve Christian teaching of misunderstanding there is just a danger of reducing spiritual things to the level of debate, and investing religion itself with an air of unreality. Let us avoid this risk by lifting the subject back into the realm of experience. Once the Christian doctrine of sin is cleared of misunderstanding, does it not fit experience like nothing else ? Has not the prodigal expressed for all time the verdict of self-accusation ? While the language is peculiar to revealed religion, is not the experience it covers universal ? We recall the confessions left on record by Plato, Aristotle, Ovid, and others, who, while masters of the intellectual life, were groping in spiritual darkness, 'feeling after' the forgiving heart of God. That language is often startlingly Christian in its import. 'I see and approve the better course,' cries Ovid in an agony of self-reproach ; 'I follow the worse.' The self-analysis of the seventh chapter of Romans has not only found an echo in the experience of millions who have found deliverance under the Gospel ; it is also the 'epitome and brief chronicle' of all pre-Christian self-knowledge of which we have any record.

And to this must be added what forms the subject of our next consideration—the universal testimony of sacrifice. Every altar that has ever smoked to Heaven has been a confessional. Sir J. G. Frazer is so struck

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with the universality of sacrifice that in his opinion propitiation is the principal element in the religious consciousness of the race. The significance of sacrifice in its bearing on a racial sense of sin is overwhelming. It is part of the cumulative evidence, derived from the obvious disorder of life, from ignorance, cruelty, oppression, from hatred, strife, and lust, from our own bitter experience of wrong-doing and of the wrong done us, of all Christianity teaches us of the nature of sin in the only complete and coherent explanation of it which is forthcoming, and, moreover, the only explanation which is accompanied by the promise of deliverance.

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IV

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST?

IN the Sacrifice of Christ we have a subject which is perhaps more generally misunderstood to-day than any other portion of Christian belief.

The Atonement, to give the subject the name we can never lay aside, has from the commencement occupied a prominent place in the faith of the Christian. The message of Christianity from the first has been a message of the Cross—not merely of the Cross in its ethical import as an appeal to self-denial, though that aspect has never been wanting, but of the Cross as the means of reconciliation between God and man. The Apostles and their converts believed the Cross to have effected a change in the relations of God and man. No one who reads the New Testament can doubt this. To the modern mind it may seem obsolete and even repellent; the tendency to-day may be to moralize or spiritualize the Cross according to some ethical or mystical standard; yet no estimate of the Sacrifice of Christ which stops short of the opening up of a way of reconciliation between God and man can satisfy historic Christianity.

It will be understood that what we have now in mind is not some *theory* of the Atonement such as from time to time has been evoked by the intellectual mood of an age. Christian belief may have outgrown St. Augustine's way of regarding the Atonement, or St. Anselm's, or that which marked the evangelical revival in England. The Atonement itself Christian belief has not outgrown; nor is it conceivable, in the light of such passages as Eph. ii. 16 and Col. i. 20, and those in which Christ is recorded to have described the purpose and value of His death in Matt. xx. 28 and Mark x. 45,

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that Christian belief ever can outgrow the Atonement. Merely to moralize it, or even to spiritualize it, is to do violence to historic Christianity. They stand or fall together.

Nor is that all. Processes which obscure the sacrificial value of the Cross are not only false to Christianity : they entirely fail the human need which Christianity discloses. Unless Christianity is a message of 'peace' with God 'through the Blood of the Cross,' neither the knowledge of God which it claims to impart, nor the nearness of God which it discloses, can bring relief to the spiritual condition of man, upon which the Christian message dwells with such terrible insistence. If, for some reason or other, the Atonement is at length become 'incredible,' Christianity is a revelation without a gospel. For the knowledge of God's holiness and man's sinfulness is, in that case, simply the clearest articulation of human despair.

I

Reference has been made in this series of papers to the world-wide phenomenon of sacrifice. Not only is the confession of sin on the lips of the best and wisest of the world's spiritual masters, but all races and tribes bear testimony to the burden of guilt by their propitiatory rites. Let this be our line of approach in viewing the Sacrifice of Christ.

The Christian's attitude to the great mass of religious practice outside his own faith is frequently misunderstood, and it must be confessed with regret that his attitude is frequently ignorant and misleading. Yet the better the Christian understands his own religion, the less inclined is he to regard 'heathen' rites and practices as so much 'error and superstition.' He will regard them—even in their crudest and most revolting forms—as the outcome of a right instinct ignorantly expressed.* What is that instinct? As expressed in

* See the author's *Religious Instinct*, p. 54 ff.

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sacrifice, the desire underlying it is that of *reparation*. Reparation is an instinct we all recognize. The child illustrates it. The law enforces it. Conscience dictates it in cases which the law cannot reach. It runs through all religions. It takes crude forms with primitive faiths—efforts, many of them revolting in their character, to propitiate an angry deity. As religion becomes more spiritual, this instinct of reparation, instead of disappearing, becomes more tragic, more exacting. In Israel it developed the more the moral sublimity of God came to be understood. Under the influence of the most spiritual of the prophets it increased in prominence. The whole religious worship of Israel as well as its ethical appeal was one long effort at propitiation.

But as this instinct of reparation advanced it only made clearer another fact—namely, that adequate reparation could not be made! This also belongs to the common facts of our experience. It has been eloquently described in words which bring it home to us all :

‘When to the session of silent thought we summon up remembrance of things past, and vanished faces reappear in the chambers of our imagination, too often have we cause to contemplate with pain the harshness and even heartlessness which we inflicted on our own. We may gnaw our hearts with remorse at the recollection of departed scenes. We may be stung and goaded into a self-discipline unknown to us before. But the one thing we cannot do is this : we cannot make adequate reparation.’*

And this experience, so painfully familiar to all except the most brutalized and self-regarding, is the experience of the human race. It gains clearest utterance in one of the later prophets of Israel, Micah—only, as we shall notice, the Hebrew prophet labours under the sense of reparation due, not to man, or not to man only, but primarily to God. The paramount problem in his mind is : ‘Wherewith shall I come

* Dr. Sparrow Simpson, *Reconciliation between God and Man*, p. 123. London : S.P.C.K. 1916.

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before God?''* He reviews in an ascending scale of value the possible reparations he *can* make for his transgressions. 'Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' Note the *ascending* series, the inadequacy of the *best*. In the anguish of his soul, the prophet even contemplates a human sacrifice, though it is a remarkable fact that the Jew, almost alone among races, never offered human sacrifices. Still, the Jew gave of his best. The principal sacrifice, 'the lamb without blemish,' always prophetic of a Sacrifice to come, for—another striking difference between the Jewish and 'heathen' sacrifices, the latter merely looked backward to the sin-stained past, whereas alone in all the world the Jewish sacrifices pointed onward to a redeemed past—the principal sacrifice, consisting of the most perfect creature, was typical only. Admittedly, it 'could not take away sin.' It could supply no real equivalent in righteousness of the wrong which had been done. No external compensation could 'make good' for transgression. The simple hymn of the evangelical poet sums up profoundly the burden of race-consciousness :

Could my zeal no languor know,
Could my tears for ever flow—
These for sin could not atone.

Transgression is a thing utterly beyond the reach of external restitution. It is spiritual, and can only be satisfied by spiritual values. With deep moral insight, the prophet sees that, while the instinct to sacrifice is right and irresistible, the problem to which the instinct addresses itself is insoluble along the lines of material sacrifice. How, then, does he conclude? In these words : 'He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but

* Mic. vi. 6-8.

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to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?’

How often does the pulpit do violence to these words by treating them as a sort of evangelical climax to the prophet's moral aspirations! So to regard them is utterly to miss the point of the whole passage. As a matter of fact, the prophet is simply thrown back on his original question. He sees that the only adequate reparation for sin is the attainment of an ideal relationship with God—the relationship of a perfect oblation, of which all sacrifice is merely distantly typical! But this is exactly the reparation which man cannot make, because man has lost the ideal relationship with God which alone could render it possible. The disordered will cannot bring it about. ‘To do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with God’—that were indeed to make up for the past, but who can do it? It is the sole ‘requirement’; He has ‘shown’ it us. Yes, but we are no nearer. Because we are sinful, reparation is beyond our power. The prophet's statement is simply the echo of the cry with which he sets out. The epilogue is the prologue in repetition: ‘Wherewith shall I come before God?’ And all the answer he can find is practically reduced to ‘wherewith’? That is the problem—not of Micah only, but of the world. In the deepest and best of Israel's seers—that is to say, in the deepest and best of the spiritual instinct of mankind—it remained unsolved. And, unless the message of Christianity be true, it remains insoluble.

2

Christianity claims that it is solved—solved in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

How does Christianity claim this? Well, in the first place, Christianity sets forth Christ as *human*. Divine, also—yes; but for the present let that wait. Christianity has all along claimed for Christ a true human nature. ‘He was made Man.’ ‘Man, of the substance of His Mother, born into the world.’ Further,

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it is a *perfect* human nature that is claimed. What is perfect human nature? A nature in absolute accord with the Divine Will. But what does this mean? It means that human nature, which had previously fallen away from the Divine Will, now remained loyal. It was given a second probation, and it stood the strain. It stood the *whole* strain. It became 'obedient *unto death*.' The ideal relationship between God and man was in those thirty-three years of Christ's life realized and maintained. Here, then, was the reparation which alone could satisfy the conditions, but which human nature, sullied by sin, could never make.

In this we see the only solution to the problem Micah voiced for the human race. But, it is asked, where is the Sacrifice? In the surrender of the human will to the Father from the first. Then, Christ's *life* was the Sacrifice? Most assuredly! His life, and His death, since the one would have been incomplete without the other. In the present conditions of human nature death is the only completion of life.

Perhaps we Christians have dwelt too exclusively on the death of our Lord. It is not to be wondered at. In it we see the measure of His love for us. Nowhere except at Calvary—not in the manger, not in the carpenter's shop, not on the bleak hillside, not among the rulers who reviled him, not in Herod's vulgar palace, not before the packed jury of Caiaphas' court, not even on the *via dolorosa*, do we realize how His heart loved us; only beneath the lonely Cross, beholding Him lifted above the scene of His failure in the agony of death, have we learnt what He meant when He said: 'So God loved the world.' Can it be wondered, then, that for us the Cross is supremely the Sacrifice? Yet we need to bear in mind the Apostle's words, '*unto death*.' It was not the outpouring of the Blood alone; it was the offering up of the will that wrought redemption for us.

The obedience was lifelong. Think of those first recorded words: 'I must be about the things of My Father'; think of the last upon the Cross: 'Father,

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into Thy hands I commend My spirit'; between those extreme submissions stretches a life of perfect, loving, joyous surrender to the Father's Will, such a life as we can well believe God intended man to live—sorrow and pain apart—when He created Him; such a life as he might have lived had he not 'broken with' God. Viewed in this light, we may reverently say of the life of Christ that it is the only normal human life ever lived. And in it we see the reparation. The requirement which strikes dismay into the heart of the prophet is fulfilled in Christ. Here is One Who continuously, without break, without flaw, without varying degree, 'did justly, loved mercy, walked humbly with God'—who, in a word, realized the ideal relationship between God and man.

The question arises: 'But how does this reparation affect mankind? How, in particular, does it affect *me*?' The answer lies in the Incarnation. Christ, according to our Faith, was not merely *a* man—He was 'made Man.' His reparation represented something done on the part of humanity. In Him we see humanity given a second chance, and succeeding where previously it had failed. Is it objected that man ought to have made the reparation? But man did make it, for Christ was Man. The 'gospel,' the good news of Christianity, is that because of the sinless life of Christ 'even unto death,' mankind stands in a relation to God different from that in which he stood before the Sacrifice of Christ was accomplished. To the conscience burdened with the sense of the impossibility of reparation the message comes that the reparation *has been made*. 'So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up with the Cross his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more. Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart: "He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death." Then he stood awhile to look and wonder, for it was very surprising to him that the

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sight of the Cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked therefore and looked again until the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. . . . Then Christian gave three leaps for joy and went on singing :

‘ Thus far did I come loaden with my sin,
“ Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in,
Till I came hither ; what a place is this !
Must here be the beginning of my bliss ?
Must here the burden fall from off my back ?
Must here the strings that bound it to me crack ?
Blest Cross ! blest sepulchre ! blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me ! ” *

Thus the great allegory, in a passage as essentially Christian as any ever written, describes the sense of reparation made. Here, in the experience of millions, is the answer to the problem of the human instinct : ‘ Wherewith shall I come before God ? ’ even with THIS. Under the burden of sins, under the miserable sense of an impossible reparation, man is the slave of sin ; he is earthbound ; he cannot rise ; his ‘ sins are too many for ’ him ; but with the knowledge of reparation accomplished, he is set free, free to return to the God Who loves him, free to exercise his will aright, and spend himself in love and service.

But someone, no doubt, will say : ‘ Surely this is the old doctrine of “ substitution,” of the “ punishment of the innocent for the guilty ! ” Surely we can’t be expected at this time of day to believe in a transaction which would never be permitted in a court of justice ! ’

Don’t let us be in a hurry. The Christian message has to be taken little by little, point by point. It can’t be grasped as a whole all at once. This is where so many make a mistake. They reject some isolated portion without waiting to consider the result when the complementary portions have been adjusted. We should never learn engineering, or any art, science, or business, if we applied at the commencement a test so unfair.

* *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, chap. vi.

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Christian's relief at the sight of the Cross is not the whole of the effect of the Sacrifice of Christ. The Catholic faith does not teach, never has taught, that we are reconciled to God *irrespective of our own participation in Christ's Sacrifice*. There is a mischievous little word which has proved the undoing of this subject in the minds of many—the word 'for.' When we read of Christ being the 'propitiation *for* the sins of the world'; when we read His own statement that He had come to 'give His life a ransom *for* many'; and other passages where the word appears in this connection, we must understand it as meaning, not 'instead of,' but 'on behalf of.' He lived, suffered, and died, He wrought out His perfect obedience, not 'instead of' us, or 'instead of' ours, but 'on behalf of' us and ours—that is, as our representative. This is the true meaning of the word as used in the New Testament, and it only needs a very little reflection to see that it lifts the Sacrifice of Christ high above the low levels of a mere 'substitution,' a visiting of the sins of the guilty on the innocent, that the guilty might be 'let off.'

The first words which accompanied the publication of the message were 'Repent ye *therefore*.'* The Sacrifice of Christ, if it was to be really effective, called for a complete 'change of mind' in those to whom it was made known. The changed condition in the relation between man and God, the freeing of the will from the bondage of unforgiven sin, was an instrument placed in the hands of man which he might use in turning effectively to God. Nor is this all; a new life, the life of grace, is infused into him in Baptism, by which he is brought into a living relationship to the humanity of Christ. This, however, is a subject by itself, and cannot adequately be dealt with here; but it must not be overlooked in viewing the Atonement as a whole.† Normally,‡ the benefit of Christ's Sacrifice has never

* Acts ii. 38.

† See No. VI. of this series.

‡ 'Normally,' because there are also the 'uncovenanted mercies of God' consequent on the Sacrifice of Christ. See close of the present chapter.

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been regarded by the Church as unconditional, but always as contingent on the response of man, and a response involving the most tremendous change to which he can submit himself. In those who would share the new-found favour of God the will of self must cease; the Will of Christ must be done. In fact, as God Self-identified Himself with us in Christ, so we have to self-identify ourselves with Christ into God.

Nothing more plainly illustrates this than the duration of the consequences and penalties of past sins long after forgiveness has been obtained and the soul has been set at liberty. Such consequences then become a part of that Cross which, in imitation of Christ, the Christian has to take upon himself and carry to the close of life. Christ did not suffer that we might be 'let off,' but rather that we might learn to suffer. Only, the consequences of sin are thereby exalted into the very means of redemption, and a new light is poured upon a very large part of the suffering of mankind. The reparation has been made, but the obedience which made it has to be learned, 'imitated,' realized, in the lives of those who are brought into 'saving contact' with Christ. Here is the ethical aspect of the Cross, which is increased instead of being diminished when we see it in its true proportion as first the Sacrifice of Christ and then the sacrifice of man in Christ. 'The Cross of Christ condemns me to become a saint.'

3

Notwithstanding the ethical aspect of the Cross, as the point which represents our self-identification with Christ, there are those who will object: 'If Christ made a reparation for sin which sinful man could not make, surely it is a case of vicarious sacrifice, and haven't we quite outgrown belief in that?'

Since when have we? As a matter of fact, vicarious sacrifice pervades the whole of our life! Amendment is continually being attempted by those who have had no share in the wrong. A mother slaves and

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denies herself in order to clear her son from debt. Do we condemn her for the sacrifice she makes?

No, we have not yet outgrown the idea of vicarious sacrifice. If we ever do, we shall cease, not merely to be Christian, but to be human; for such is the social and corporate constitution of mankind that there is no getting away from vicarious sacrifice! Vicarious sacrifice is an aspect of race-continuity.

Probably the idea which has prejudiced so many against the Atonement has been the too literal application to Christ of expressions which belong in the first place to *compulsory* sacrifice. We read, *e.g.*, such words as 'the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all,'* and we revolt from what seems to us very much like the punishment of the innocent without the free consent of the innocent. Such expressions abound in the Old Testament, as is natural in the record of a religion of which compulsory sacrifice formed so prominent a part, and had a prophetic value. They are not absent from the New. The words of St. Paul sometimes lend colour to the impression we are considering. This, again, is but natural, for if the sacrificial instinct is interpreted in Christ, if He is the fulfilment of the long training in attempted reparation, we are bound to find such expressions associated with Christ on the part of those who recognized in Him the perfect Sacrifice. In this way, also, they inevitably make their appearance in our worship and devotion. The *Agnus Dei*, the address of St. Francis to the Saviour, and similar expressions, are constantly on our lips, while the fact that the central act of Christian worship has ever been the Sacrifice of the Altar confirms the impression of vicarious expiation. But in every connection it must be remembered that the Sacrifice of Christ was *voluntarily* undertaken. This is no afterthought to meet the difficulties of devotional language. It is plain from the first; dimly understood in prophecy, always fully recognized in all Christian treatment of Christ's Sacrifice. If 'the Lord laid on

* Isa. liii. 6.

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Him the iniquity of us all,' it was because He stood forth in pity and love to bear the burden, because of His own free-will He self-identified Himself with the human race. All sacrificial expressions respecting Christ we must regard thus in the light of a voluntary act. 'Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not; then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy Will.'*

And we must remember, too—even if only to be just to the Christianity we are criticizing—that He into whose lips prophecy puts those words is God Himself. For the gospel message is nothing less than this: that God, for the love He had for us, became Man, and wrought the reparation. The life and death of Jesus Christ was an act of the voluntary love of God. If Christianity taught that God had selected some one good man, and laid the sins of the world upon him, we should justly feel that the teaching was ethically untenable. No doubt such a crude presentment of the Atonement continues to disfigure Christian teaching in certain quarters, and it certainly is such an idea that secularists set up for abuse and ridicule. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has recently told us with great indignation that people won't have it.† There is not an instructed Christian that will not rejoice to hear of such a refusal! The travesty of the Atonement which Sir Arthur rejects—apparently under the impression that he is rejecting Catholic teaching—is not and never has been the teaching of the Church. Jesus Christ was never set forth as a good man who was made scape-goat for the rest of mankind. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.'‡ At the root of the Atonement lies the Incarnation.

Awhile ago a Sunday newspaper, commenting on the subject of the Passion, expressed surprise that God 'could not forgive sins right away without all this fuss.' There must be, one supposes, the kind of mind which that surprise expresses, otherwise a popular journal would hardly belie its better judgment in ex-

* Ps. xl. 7; cf. Heb. x. 7.

† *The New Revelation.*

‡ 2 Cor. v. 19.

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pressing it. One would have thought that the answer to such an objection must be obvious to all. It lies in our experience with one another. We also are called upon to exercise forgiveness—daily. Assuming that we can and do forgive, of what efficacy is our forgiveness unless there is on the part of the offender a disposition to seek it? Does it really alter the relations between us? The forgiver wishes to be friendly, to return to the former relationship; but the offender will not acknowledge his fault. The forgiveness is scouted. The *impasse* remains. If it takes two to make a quarrel, it certainly takes two to make one up.

Forgiveness, while a duty enjoined on all, is of no avail until the offender tells you he is sorry. *Then* he takes your side against his fault. You and he are now on the same side of the quarrel. The offence is no longer between you. You are *at one*. In repentance the sinner takes God's side against his sin. That is what penitence really is. There could be no at-onement with God without it. And this is what the Sacrifice of Christ initiated. If we could conceive of God passing sin over, the sinner must have been left everlastingly at odds with Him. Unconditional mercy would have meant everlasting sin!

At the same time, do not let us make a common mistake, and suppose that God required a sacrifice to make Him love man. While pardon awaited reparation, love did not. It was *because* God loved man that Himself became the Sacrifice. The Incarnation, the Atonement, spring from His love; they did not induce it. 'So God *loved* the world that He *gave*.' Sin made no difference to God's love. So much we may say—with wonder! But love could not pass sin over, for sin is the negation of love.

4

One more difficulty remains. People sometimes say: 'You tell us that Christ's Sacrifice is contingent for its efficacy on our self-identification with Him;

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then, what about all those millions who lived before He came, and what of the myriads who have passed away since without having so much as heard of His Sacrifice ?'

The answer of the Church to this is quite clear. As to those who lived before the Incarnation we are distinctly given to understand that the Sacrifice of Christ had a retrospective value. It occurred in time, but its efficacy is not limited to any one particular time. In mystic language He is spoken of as being 'slain from the foundation of the world.'* Further, we have indications that, owing to the merit of Christ, all the good in man, all that he has tried to perform of right and truth, prevails and triumphs. St. Peter declares that 'in every nation he that feareth "God" and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.'† In the same way, we are bidden to leave the myriads of those who have never heard of the gospel to 'the uncovenanted mercies of God.' There can be no doubt that the reparation offered by Christ has far wider effects than in those who are conscious of them. The wonder with which our own salvation inspires us if we are really penitent opens up large fields of spiritual imagination, vast resources of hope in the 'loving wisdom of our God,' Who, in our own case, has found so marvellous a way to bring His lost ones home. And while the words of Christ and the Church's teaching are definite as to the destiny of those who wilfully reject the full knowledge of His love and mercy, there is, legitimately, a 'larger hope' for all who have passed through this life in ignorance of His salvation. To believe this and rest our faith upon it is to magnify, not diminish, the all-powerful Sacrifice of Christ. We may confidently say it is of world-wide efficacy, unless wilfully rejected.

At the same time, we do well to bear in mind our Lord's answer when 'one said unto Him : Lord, are there few that be saved? . . . Strive to enter in.'‡

* Rev. iii. 18.

† Acts x. 35.

‡ Luke xiii. 23, 24.

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Here, as elsewhere, Christianity is not given us as a piece of speculation or the satisfaction of curiosity, but as a practical method. For us who are not ignorant of the gospel the way of salvation is perfectly plain, and the task it places before us is more than sufficient to occupy all our thoughts and energies. After all, sin and pardon are personal matters; they do not wait for or depend upon a complete vision of the redemptive purpose to be put into practice.

Here we cannot do better than conclude with the words of the late Canon Scott Holland, addressed to Sir Oliver Lodge, in which the application of the Sacrifice of Christ to our present need is so plainly stated: 'He does, on our behalf, that we may be enabled to do what, of ourselves, we were powerless to do. He does it on our account, that He may pledge us before God to become hereafter, through Him, under the slow schooling of His discipline, that which as yet we are not; so that God can love us now in our lovelessness in view of the Beloved in Whom we shall yet, some day, become worthy of being loved. We are not curs, asking to be let off our whipping; but penitents who pray to be delivered out of that moral impotence which forbids us sharing in the Sacrifice by which alone man's misery can be purged away. We ask that we may receive into ourselves of the purity of Christ Himself, in order that then we may not be afraid of partaking of His suffering.'*

* *Creeds and Critics*, p. 65.

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BOOKS RECOMMENDED

- Moberly, Dr. R. : Atonement and Personality. Murray.
Simpson, Dr. W. J. Sparrow : Reconciliation Between God and Man, chaps. v., vii., viii., and x. S.P.C.K.
Scott Holland : Creeds and Critics, iii. Mowbray.
Green, Canon Peter : Studies in the Cross (especially recommended). Wells Gardner.
MacColl, Canon : Christianity in Relation to Science and Morals, chap. viii. Longmans.
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V

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE CENTRALITY OF CHRIST?

SOME of us who had to find our way to the faith through nineteenth-century agnosticism can never sufficiently acknowledge our indebtedness to Dr. Gore's lectures on the Incarnation.* The opening sentences dispelled the haze by which we were surrounded, and brought again into focus the central Divine fact we sought:

'Christianity exists in the world as a distinctive religion, and if we are asked, What is the distinguishing characteristic of this religion? we can scarcely hesitate for an answer. *Christianity is faith in a certain Person, Jesus Christ*, and by faith in Him is meant such unreserved self-committal as is only possible because *faith in Jesus is understood to be faith in God, and union with Jesus union with God*. "We know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."'

There it was!—nothing new; not a theological afterthought to meet a new philosophical exigency; the words quoted at the close of the passage took us back to the first century. It was 'the message we heard from the beginning'; but, alas! we had forgotten it, or rather it had become obscured and distorted in the vicissitudes of apologetic. Here we were called back to it once more. Here was the centre of the faith, the answer and the challenge to an agnostic world. Christianity was the religion of a Person, and that Person Jesus Christ.

'*Faith in Jesus is understood to be faith in God*'—but is it? Is not the Christianity of many thousands of us little else than theism with Christ tacked on—a very slight advance on Judaism, with its strong faith in the Unity of God and its reverence for the prophet as His mouthpiece. In this we miss the jubilant note

* The Bampton Lectures for the year 1891 (Murray).

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of the New Testament : ' the life was manifested and we have seen it . . . that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us ' ; and again, ' the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

But does this differ from that way of setting forth Jesus Christ as God by an older theology which made His earthly life unreal, and His agonies, His prayers, His temptations a kind of acting ? Markedly it differs. The difference will be clear if we transpose the sentence above quoted, as Dr. Gore's meaning admits of our doing, and say : ' Faith in God is understood to be faith in Jesus.' *Now* His human nature and His human experience have real values for us—the values of finality. Indeed it is perhaps the finality of Christ and of all He discloses, rather than His Divinity, that calls for emphasis. To say ' Christ is God ' brings us little, if any, further, either towards a perception of the Divine mind and heart, or towards recognition of the ultimate obligation of His example and precepts. For although we are not without some knowledge of God apart from Christ, both by the earlier revelation and by reason of natural evidence, yet without Him we have no sufficient apparatus for assaying Divine values, we have no instrument with which to ascertain Divine magnitude. Had we any such, we should already ' know God,' and should not stand in need of the incarnation. To say, then, ' Christ is God,' in the rather crude sense of a bygone day, is to affirm little. The affirmation at the heart of Christianity is that ' God is Jesus,' or, to put it in apostolic phrase : ' God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.' This is what we mean by the centrality of Christ. The statement that Jesus is God is not complete, is not even intelligible, without the complementary statement : God is Jesus. And in saying this, religious faith passes out of theism into something which is definitely more. Judging from the New Testament, this is what took place in the minds and hearts of the first believers. They learned to regard and to address the risen and

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ascended Christ by a term equivalent to 'Jehovah.' He was henceforth 'Lord'; not solely Divine Lord, for, as we have already seen (p. 13), His disclosure of the Divine nature reveals a Lordship shared with the Father and the Holy Spirit; yet for the mind and heart of the believer He is this Lord *manifested*; One whose every spoken word, every act of power, every compassionate glance, every pronouncement of approval or condemnation has Divine finality. The Christian religion consists of those who affirm this to be so, and who try to act on the affirmation.

Where, then, is the ground of this affirmation? It is entirely the *religious* ground; it is the religious sense responding to a unique appeal. As Dr. Orchard puts it: 'Christ is not to be called God because of some philosophical notion of what constitutes Godhead, but on the religious notion of what can be worshipped, trusted, adored.'* The affirmation rests on *recognition*, the recognition of which Plato speaks when he tells us of that in man which 'leaps up to salute the truth.' To turn this recognition into 'unreserved self-committal' is to make the venture of faith, and here is the genesis of conscious Christianity in the soul.

It is because my whole instinct for religion finds its satisfaction in Jesus, can rest in Him, grow, expand, resist, and wax mighty in Him, that I know God is Jesus. Therefore I am bold to reverse the whole of the ordinary language of theology, and say: God is this helpless Babe; God is this Man of toil and prayer and benediction; God is this sympathizing, yet most discriminating Guide and Authority; God is this Man silent before His accusers; this Man forgiving in His torture; this Man stretched in agony upon the cross; this Man passing back to earth arrayed in 'that body that shall be'; God is this human nature given into our lips and coming into our lives in a substance which He first created and now creates anew. God is Jesus Christ.

* *The Necessity of Christ*, p. 142.

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Let the inquirer who has never done so before read the accounts of the Passion, substituting 'God' for 'Jesus,' and he will rise from the task with a new conception of what Christianity is at the heart of it. Nay, let him read the whole of the Gospels in the same way, remembering that the Person to Whom he applies the name 'God' is at the same time in the most literal sense 'Man,' and he will have an insight into 'the faith of a Christian' which he can scarcely gain in any other way.

And when he turns from the Gospels thus read to the life around him, he will view with amazement our timorous and tentative 'Christian social ethics'! He will realize that the faith which did once change the world was a faith in an ultimate Authority. The Sermon on the Mount is at present a piece of useless machinery, very much admired, but idle because it lacks the dynamic of God. To believe that God is Jesus is inevitably to order our life according to the Will of Jesus. It can be nothing less, for to stop short of His least command, to falter in the 'unreserved self-committal,' argues belief-with-reservation, which is precisely what faith in God can never be.

When, however, this conclusion is reached, 'the Churches' get frightened. They sincerely desire Christ should reign, but they have not yet realized that His kingdom is the 'extension of the Incarnation' in themselves, and that this means an extension of His sufferings and self-limitation as well as of His glory. Their attitude is curiously 'Messianic'; they are looking for a 'Divine event'; they do not realize that Christ is the event. They have unconsciously slipped back into the religious hope of Israel. Their Christianity has become decentralized. They have none of the 'unreserved self-committal' which marked the Christian life at the first. This is no doubt a serious charge, though the writer is too conscious of its application to himself to write in the spirit of 'impeachment.' It can best be substantiated by recalling our attention to the way in which the first

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Christians received Christ, thought of Him, trusted in Him, and then by examining the impression He made on those who knew Him during His years on earth.

I

One of the rare references to Christianity outside the New Testament—Pliny's famous rescript to Trajan—describes the Christians commencing the day by singing a hymn to Christ as God. Now, among pagans it was no uncommon thing for odes to be addressed to this or that hero as *a* god. Their pantheon teemed with heroes elevated to Divine honours by 'apotheosis.' The striking thing about the Christians was that they refused to include Christ among these. They refused to treat Him as *a* god. For them He was not a man whom heroic service had raised to a Divine plane; He was God Who had taken their nature and become Man. In fact it was the very reverse of 'apotheosis' which occupied the mind of the first Christians respecting their Lord. Pagans believed men had become gods; Christians affirmed God had become Man. This is a historical fact beyond dispute. The persecutions bear witness to it. To the Christian the multitude of pagan deities were usurpers—nay, 'an idol was nothing at all.'* This scepticism was also shared by thoughtful pagans. But the difference between Christian scepticism and pagan scepticism was that the latter was pure unbelief; the former a reaction caused by belief in the supreme Being of Christ. Consequently, while the pagan had no great incentive to become an iconoclast, the Christian had every reason to become such in the interests of Christ. Where all belief is equally superstitious, men can afford to be tolerant; nay, in the interests of institutions based on outworn beliefs and still popularly supposed to depend upon them, they are to some extent pledged to be tolerant. 'To the magistrate,' as Gibbon tells us, 'all religions were

* I Cor. viii. 4.

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equally useful.' Where religious belief is understood to be an empty convention, no principle is involved. With the Christians, on the contrary, pagan ceremonial was not merely a convention; it was false. It was false to the One Manifestation of the Divine in Whom they believed. Accordingly, they refused to offer incense to the gods or acknowledge them in any way. This refusal, as the worship of Christ spread, threatened the State with revolution of the most far-reaching kind—revolution not political or social in its immediate motive, but certainly political and social in its outcome. Hence the Christians were known as 'atheists,' and their relation to the State was seen to be dangerously reactionary. The State accordingly took measures to suppress them, and the result was the destruction of vast numbers by the most terrible means ever devised. Thus the early persecutions witnessed to the centrality of Christ.

When we turn to the Epistles, which represent what their readers already acknowledged in consequence of the teaching they had received, we see Christ always occupying the central place in loyalty and worship. This is happily so obvious to the majority of us that there is no need to cite passages in proof. St. Paul's words to the Christians in Rome, when he pauses in his argument to say of Christ, 'Who is over all, God blessed for ever,'* are typical not only of the mind of St. Paul, but of the apostolical missionaries everywhere. Earlier still, in what are probably the earliest Christian letters preserved, those to the Thessalonians, written about the year 50, we see Christ occupying the place of 'Lord' in the belief of the Thessalonian Christians—*i.e.*, of 'universal Sovereign.' All that Jehovah was to the pious Jew of pre-Messianic times, Jesus was to these converts. Nor did this estimate express a passing moment of spiritual ecstasy. As time went on, as the return of their Lord was delayed, there is no modification of this primitive assurance. St. John's writings, latest of

* Rom. ix. 5.

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the apostolic cycle, demonstrate beyond misunderstanding the Divine place Christ held in the Christian estimate. He is 'that which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands have handled—the Word. The Life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and declare unto you the Life, the eternal Life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us.'*

If we were to say that Christian converts from Judaism transferred their faith from Jehovah to Christ, we should be saying what is theologically inadmissible, and yet such a statement would not be an untrue account of the supremacy which Christ held in their heart and thought and life; while those who came to the new faith from paganism came to rest, not in the theism of the Jew, but in the faith that 'God is Jesus.'

2

From records which tell us as plainly as language can of the place Christ held in the love and worship and thought of early believers, we pass to consider the kind of impression He made on those who witnessed His life amongst them.

In so doing we will omit all reference to the Fourth Gospel. This must not be understood as implying any share in the prejudice that exists against its traditional date and authorship, but because its reminiscences of the Ministry of Jesus are so obviously written in the light of the Resurrection, Ascension, and the Coming of the Spirit, that, unlike the Synoptics, they do not afford us quite the same glimpse into the mind of the disciples before those events had confirmed the beginnings of their faith. In other words, the Fourth Gospel so completely proves the contention in this chapter as to foreclose discussion; the first three Gospels equally prove it, but in a less direct and even more instructive way.

* 1 John i. 1, 2.

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And first a word as to the relationship of the first three Gospels to the rest of the New Testament. This in itself is a matter so frequently misunderstood that a short space may be well spent in the attempt to clear it up. Those who read their New Testament straight forward are aware of commencing with books in which the humanity of Jesus Christ is brought very much to the fore; then, in the Fourth Gospel, in Acts and the Epistles, they find a full-grown faith in the Divinity of Jesus. They need to bear in mind that several of the latter books stand first *in the order of writing*, and existed in all probability some years at least before the first three Gospels gained their complete form.* The reasonable conjecture is that the writers, *after they had come to a full understanding of the truth about Christ*, cast back in their memory to the days before the Passion for a faithful account of the impression He made upon them and upon the people generally while as yet His claims were either partially or entirely misunderstood. In other words, in the desire to trace the genesis of their faith, they achieved a strictly contemporary account of the impression Christ made on those who knew Him. Unlike St. John, who wrote in the full glow of the 'open secret,' they subordinated their faith in 'the Lord' to the task of narrating its origin. The 'mixed' nature of their narrative, as bearing on the human and Divine elements in Christ, together with the date of its composition, quite forbid our regarding it as the life of One Who was subsequently the subject of Divine honour. The record is that of men who already possessed the secret, who believed as firmly as St. John in the Incarnation, as firmly as the speakers in Acts and the authors of the Epistles in the

* Certain portions, however, of the Synoptics may have been in existence before the earliest Epistles made their appearance. Dr. Nolloth is of opinion that the non-Marcan element, composed of sayings common to SS. Matthew and Luke, is absolutely contemporary with Christ's Ministry. See the *Rise of the Christian Religion*, pp. 19-24. This conjecture, if correct, only adds force to the contention presented here.

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Divine nature of their Lord, but who had laid upon them the task of recapturing the impressions of an earlier day when faith had to battle against preconception, and love against prejudice and doubt. It is this which gives the first three Gospels their fascination, the fascination of all literature which attempts to describe 'how it strikes a contemporary.'

They give us the impression produced on the people at large, and on those whom Jesus gathered by spiritual affinity into the inner circle of discipleship. With both we find the impression a conflicting one. There were times when the multitude would have taken Him by force and made Him a king. There were times when, spiritually incapable of His teaching, they lost touch and became even hostile. The narratives never let us forget that their central Figure stands out against a background of popular expectation. In some points—in what we now perceive to be the vital points—He fulfilled that expectation. In others, in the more crudely national and political, He disappointed it. Throughout His Ministry this constituted Him a paradox. Paradox is a dangerous quality in a leader. It arrests the few who are capable of reflection; it alienates the majority, who can see but one side. One of the most remarkable things in the Gospels—indeed, in all literature—is the tragic presence of these conflicting impressions made by Christ. We are kept so subtly aware of them that nothing short of truth to fact—no mere human ingenuity, however brilliant—could have given us so poignant a tragedy. Christ's claim to be leader, and yet His refusal to place Himself at the head of a national movement, was to the common mass of people a contradiction and a cruel disappointment. The result was Calvary.

But when we have seized this essential feature of the Synoptic narrative—the paradoxical impression produced by Christ on the multitude—we are as far as ever from an explanation of His method. Why should He have lent Himself to such a mixed impression?

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Why did He not frankly disclaim political messiahship? Such a disclaimer would have been readily understood, as it was in the case of the Baptist. It is not enough to reply that the language of the national hope was the only one in which He could have made Himself accessible to those about Him. Prophets had spoken and had been listened to without claiming or accepting the title of Messiah. Nor is it enough to say that Christ was 'spiritual' while the people He appealed to were materialized; for all the prophets were in the same case. Nor is it conceivable that He should have chosen paradox as a kind of practical dialectic by which to startle into attention the few who were capable of response. Such a conscious selection of method is quite foreign to the artlessness both of the narrative and of the Subject of it. The paradox goes deeper than any of these suggested explanations; its roots lie in the paradoxical nature of Him Who called Himself the Son of Man, and its result was to elicit, in the 'men of goodwill,' a faith in *Himself* such as the mysterious impression He created could alone arouse.

This is still more clearly seen when we turn to those who responded to His claim, and consider the sort of impression He made upon them. He inspired them with a devotion to Himself which has no parallel in history. Again and again He tested it. Probably there never was a time when it was harder to 'follow Christ' than while He was visibly with His disciples. The more we ponder the narrative, the more we wonder how their devotion should have stood the shocks to which their preconceptions were successively submitted. Yet He succeeded. Popular enthusiasms broke down; the devotion of the disciples steadily strengthened. And He threw Himself upon it. Beyond all question, *this* was the object of those three years of Ministry—to elicit a supreme devotion to Himself. True, He could not wholly eradicate the contemporary strain. He could not entirely separate this newly formed devotion from the matrix of national

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tradition. He could not quite bring it to birth. He acknowledged as much. He awaited the coming of Another. But that 'Other' was to be in all respects an *alter ego*. 'He shall not speak of Himself; He shall take of Mine, and show it unto you.' So far, then, from being failure, the incompleteness of the task was part of the very task itself. Those who responded were still 'foolish and slow of heart.' Consequently, when He was torn from them by the disaster of Gethsemane, their hope died. Nothing more sublimely illustrates the object of Christ in His training of the disciples than their forsaking Him in His extremity! So entirely had He succeeded in making them His, in making Himself the centre of their life, that with His betrayal into the hands of His enemies they were broken men.

How this despair was reversed by the Resurrection, how the certainty that He was alive for evermore, coupled with the coming of the Spirit, opened their eyes to the whole redemptive purpose of God, has already been discussed in these pages.* What we are here concerned with is the way in which these reminiscences of His Ministry discover His purpose—viz., to place Himself before men and women as the immediate and supreme object of their faith, hope, and love. It is obviously impossible to cover the whole ground of the Synoptic narrative here, but a few citations may introduce all the detail that is necessary into the general scheme that has been attempted.

Christ claims a place in the love and devotion of His followers transcending the most sacred earthly ties. The father, mother, relatives, are, if necessary, to be forsaken for Him. Life itself is to be sacrificed if loyalty to Him demand it. It is very striking that only once does the terminology of 'repentance and faith' appear in the conditions of discipleship as laid down by Christ Himself.† True, as

* See IV.

† Mark i. 14, 15. The words convey the idea of a synopsis of Christ's preaching rather than a single utterance of His own.

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has already been pointed out,* His 'call' supervened on the tremendous arousal effected through the Baptist. He had at His feet a penitent populace, and He directed them in their penitence, not to Jehovah, as the Prophets had been wont to do, but to Himself. To 'forsake all and follow' Him was repentance and faith in action. His omission of all moral or theological conditions can have had but one object—that of getting men to centre themselves on Himself. Response to Him meant repentance, just as it meant faith. To turn to *Him* was to turn from sin, sense, the world—all that hinders the soul in its Godward aim; to follow *Him* was to realize that 'unreserved self-committal' which 'is only possible because faith in Jesus is understood to be faith in God.'

There are, in the account of the Ministry given us by the Synoptics, sayings uttered under the stress of intense feeling which light up His personality as by lightning-flashes to unimagined heights and depths. One of these is His call to men and women to come to *Him* and in *Him* find their rest.† The saying breaks from His lips as He emerges from an ecstasy of thanksgiving. Looking round on the burdened humanity about Him, He bids them—not to seek Jehovah, but to come to Himself and be at rest. Such language transcends the human altogether, but it is only a part of the consistent self-assertion which the Synoptics recollect His having employed while as yet they knew not its full significance.

It is quite clear from the first three Gospels that the 'authority' with which Christ taught was not confined to the great occasions of public teaching, but was maintained throughout the whole of His intercourse with men and women, whether His disciples or no, and at no time rose to a sublimer height than

* See III.

† Matt. xi. 28, 29. Note the preceding three verses. There is an alternative reading of considerable authority—'Come unto Me and I will *rest you*'—which still more forcibly expresses His claim.

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when he had to meet the opposition of His enemies. Where other men have been glad to fall back upon precedent or tradition, or to appeal to reason, or to some other 'ultimate,' for the confirmation or vindication of their message, Christ relies solely on Himself. 'I say unto you' is, from first to last, the guarantee of the truth of all He utters. It is quite evident also that He identifies His cause with Himself, 'so that a man's attitude towards Him determines the state of his soul and will be his test in the final judgment.'* To be ashamed of Himself and His words is to prove the eternal undoing of the soul.† To hear His words and obey them is to build an enduring edifice on an unyielding foundation.‡ To hesitate to 'take up the cross' is to be unworthy, not of being one of God's chosen, but unworthy of *Him*.§ Those who do miracles in His name are to be encouraged, not because they prove themselves thereby just or good or 'of the kingdom,' but because they cannot lightly speak evil of *Him*.|| The greatest deceivers are those who shall subsequently assume His place and mission.¶

But the claim reaches its most astounding form when Christ announces that to serve humanity is to serve Him! A great and just leader of men might claim that by serving him, acting under his direction, following his example, we are serving humanity; Christ inverts the position. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'** Compared with Him humanity itself takes a secondary place! The value of all service, of every act of mercy, of every bending of strength in the cause of weakness, is that it ministers to *Him*. Who is this that has the audacity to place Himself thus—to propose Himself as our motive? Such an announcement is not only to transcend the

* See Dr. Orchard, *The Necessity of Christ*, p. 82 ff.

† Mark viii. 38.

‡ Matt. vii. 24; Luke vi. 47.

§ Matt. x. 38.

|| Mark ix. 39.

¶ Matt. xxiv. 5.

** Matt. xxv. 40.

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individual ; it is to transcend the human. It is to be either superhumanly right or superhumanly insane. But say what we will of its implications, there the claim stands, and whether we accept it or reject it, it is impossible to hesitate for one moment to acknowledge that Christ's claim to be the centre of human life is absolute.

3

The impression we gather from the testimony of the first Christians, from their worship, from the faith expressed in the Epistles, from the reminiscences of their dawning consciousness of Christ, is that they regarded *Jesus* as the Supreme Object of their love, obedience, and worship. They paid Him, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, Divine honours ; but the only way to the Father was by Him, and the mission of the Spirit was to secure and 'realize' His presence in their hearts. If, then, we ask what Christianity was at the first, what it essentially and unchangeably is, we are compelled to answer : The unreserved committal of the soul to Jesus. If Christianity is no longer this, then the religion which now goes by that name is, in St. Paul's words, 'another gospel which is not another.*' It is something substituted for Christianity, something masquerading under its name. In order to be Christians, in order to experience the 'salvation' Christ offers, both individual and social, we have got to get back to the one, simple, all-compelling affirmation that *God is Jesus*.

The increasing tendency to-day, both within the Church and outside, is to assign to Christ a high place among those who are called 'masters of the spiritual life,' to accord Him a place in the theosophistic pantheon. Multitudes profess a deep interest in Christianity, or in those portions of it which, like distant peaks, catch the light of the secular sunrise. They tell us that such interest is quite compatible with a like regard for Buddhism or other forms of the reli-

* Gal. i. 6, 7.

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gious consciousness. When we, with Christ's own audacity, place Him before them as the centre of the spiritual life of the world, they smile and say, 'Only Roman Catholics and High Churchmen so regard Him.'

Now, the difference between their attitude and ours exactly expresses the difference between the Christian religion, as above described by reference to the original documents, and any attitude, however 'interested,' however reverential, which stops short of this. The modern tendency rests on the assumption that we are judges of Christ. The Christian, on the contrary, feels that in His presence judgment is impossible. Our instinct, longing for its ultimate rest; our conscience, stricken with the sense of sin, finds in Him alone *the Way, the Truth, the Life*. He is ultimate, and all our judgment is humbly transferred to Him. We confess to a deep interest in, a due reverence for, the human 'masters' and pioneers of the spiritual instinct. We desire to cultivate and extend the comparative study of religion. We would treasure every fragment of religious experience that has come down to us from the lips of poet, sage, and seer. But we feel that without Christ as the co-ordinating centre all the religious experience of the race is but a reiterated human cry without a Divine response.

Again, as in the first days, it looks as though Christ will only be tolerated as one among many. Again the world offers a place for Him in its pantheon. Again we decline it. We are trying to prepare ourselves, by a fuller self-committal to Him, for the possible consequences of such a refusal. If certain world-wide tendencies, intellectual and social, advance at their present rate unchecked, the day may be very near when it will again be penal to pay Divine honours to Christ. An age remarkable for its tolerance may smile at the idea of 'persecution,' but history proves that nothing is more inimical to the Christian faith than universal toleration. It was the spirit of toleration which, in the first age, lighted the streets of

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Rome with the living holocausts of Christians; and Eastward to-day the horizon is lurid with a like kindling. The paradox is simple enough, for toleration can never afford to tolerate the intolerant, and Christianity can never tolerate equality with Christ.

The subject of this paper occupies the central place in the series, and the reader, whether or no he shares the writer's belief, will easily see the reason of its position. We have been leading up through man's desire for God, through our innate belief in freedom, through the intolerable burden of sin, and our craving for reparation, to the One Who shows us God. All that we comprehend under the term 'salvation,' our fellowship one with another and all it includes of duty and blessedness, here and beyond, centre in that One. This is the religion of 'God made Man.' This alone is Christianity. And unless this be true we feel we have no revelation of God, and nothing to offer mankind.

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Forrest, Dr. : The Christ of History and Experience. T. and T. Clark.
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VI

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE NEW HUMANITY?

WE shall be in a better position to understand the work of Christ as applied to the individual if we first consider His purpose for humanity as a whole. Necessary as the individual aspect is, it is secondary to the collective. Man comes before men. It is the Church that is the complete witness to the Divine purpose.* The individual is at best a partial witness. Moreover, our grasp of Christianity has suffered because in nearly every great religious movement or 'revival' the stress has been laid on the individual soul instead of on the 'new creation'; on the cell instead of on the organism; thus obscuring the paramount need of unity as well as the social and ethical implications of a salvation which is collective both in its aim and method.

I

Let us turn back to the human conditions which we considered under the head of 'What are we to understand by sin?' Summing them up, we may say that the disorder of the human will which Christianity calls sin involved:

1. Separation from God, ignorance of His nature and will, and incapacity to do His will, even where man was partially enlightened.
2. The sense of guilt, profound unhappiness, inability to find true satisfaction.
3. Bondage to sin, a state of obligation to yield to temptation, no matter from what quarter it may arise.

Agnosticism, a guilty conscience, bondage to evil—this threefold natural condition is the experience of

* Eph. iii. 10.

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the whole human race. It may vary in its distribution. The experience of some individuals may illustrate one set of conditions more than another. For example, where the religious instinct has been more profoundly aware of the existence and claims of God, the sense of guilt and the irksomeness of moral bondage have been felt in a greater degree. Where, on the other hand, the sense of sin has been weak, and men appear to have little difficulty in conforming to some more or less conventional standard of virtue, the desire for God as the ultimate resting-place of the soul has been less vigorous. Allowing, however, for these differences, the experience of mankind verifies the condition we have summarized.

Now, the purpose of God in taking our nature was to meet and reverse each one of these conditions.

1. There is, to meet the first condition, the revelation of the Nature and Will of God as seen in Jesus Christ. Now, it should be carefully noted that the very act of revealing God flowed out of Christ's perfect submission to the Father, so that not only did He reveal God to men in His own Divine Person, but also in His own Person as Man He brought humanity through His own obedience again into harmony with the Divine Will. True, this harmony required to be 'made good,' in respect of man in general, in and through the restoration of individuals; yet forasmuch as Jesus Christ is Man, humanity in Him had been raised to its lost relationship with God. This aspect of the work of Jesus Christ is commonly called the Atonement. When St. Paul says that 'through Christ we have received the Atonement,'* he means that there is no longer a *necessary* alienation from God. Our agnosticism is at an end, both spiritually and intellectually.

2. By the perfect obedience of Christ as Man, 'reparation' for past guilt has been made. Consequently, to those 'in Christ' there is, in this sense, 'no more conscience of sin.'† Consequently, all

* Rom. v. 11.

† Heb. x. 2.

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mankind has but to find its way 'into Christ' to be relieved of this burden to which universal sacrifice and remorse bear witness. 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.'* On account of this aspect of Christ's work for the whole race, He is spoken of as 'the Propitiation.'

3. Again, with the 'conscience of sin' there vanishes also the obligation to sin—the bondage. For those 'in Christ'—*potentially* for the whole human race—release has been effected from slavery to sin. Those who were formerly under this bondage are 'in Christ' 'bond-slaves to God.'† The strong ethical implications of this position are obvious.‡ The law dominating their life is henceforth the law of holiness, union with the holy will of God having been begun. On this account the work of Christ for the race is known as Redemption—a figure borrowed from the institution of slavery, and expressing not only deliverance from man's birth-condition, but also indicating the nature of true 'freedom'—that, namely, not of 'unchartered liberty,' but of subjection to the Supreme Will.

Now, it is very striking that these three words, Atonement, Propitiation, Redemption, are the words oftenest in use in the New Testament to express the work of Christ for the human race. The first, *καταλλαγή*, is distinctive of St. Paul's presentment of the matter; the second, *ἱλασμός*, of St. John's; while the third, *λύτρον*, the 'redemption-price' we owe to Christ Himself, as reported in St. Mark x. 45.§ These three aspects, then, of the work of Christ, which will be familiar to every reader of the New Testament as those most frequently in use to express the work of Christ, exactly meet and reverse those conditions under which man universally labours in his natural

* Rom. viii. 1.

† Rom. vi. 22.

‡ Rom. vi. 11-23.

§ Note, however, that several words, chiefly used by St. Paul, group themselves round this idea of *λύτρον*. The reader is referred to important notes on the subject in Maclear, *Introduction to the Creeds*, pp. 129 ff.

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state. Thus, the Atonement addresses itself to our natural agnosticism; the Propitiation to our sense of guilt; and the Redemption to our bondage to sin. And it should be noticed that, while these words express three *aspects* of Christ's work, they all flow from the one central conception—of something done on behalf of mankind by Christ as *Man*.

So far from being mere theory, this result of sacramental union with Christ is borne out by Christian experience in every age. Those who have been brought into 'a saving relation with Christ,' who have been 'born anew into Him,' have continually testified during nineteen hundred years to a direct union with God, satisfying the instinctive consciousness of, and desire for, union with Him; and to the removal of the sense of guilt; and to release from bondage to sinful habit, both hereditary and acquired. This testimony of the Christian consciousness is invaluable, and the attention of the sceptic has been frequently directed to it.* It prepares us for appreciating the potential universality of Christ's purpose and work, and for the meaning of the expression which heads this chapter.

2

The object, then, of Christ's coming is the renovation of the human race—conditionally on individual submission—by means of incorporation with Himself. Now, it is obvious that One Who stands in such a relation to the race must be *Man*. This has always been part of the Christian faith about Jesus Christ—that He is true and perfect Man.

It is essential, however, to keep in mind the whole truth about Jesus Christ, especially when we are considering a particular part of it. Let us therefore remember what the whole faith about Him is: that in the Incarnation God the Son, eternally God, was by the Holy Ghost united with a true human body and

* As, e.g., Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 102.

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soul in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and that this union was such that God the Son became the personal principle of the Being Jesus Christ.* In other words, while He is One Person, and that Person Divine, He has two natures, and the human nature is a real and perfect human nature. While, therefore, we think and speak of Jesus Christ uniformly as God, we can never afford to forget that He is truly and perfectly Man. For all that concerns our salvation, all that concerns the restoration of the human race in Him, is the direct consequence of this central belief, which we speak of as the Incarnation.

Steadfastly keeping in mind these facts necessary to a *whole* conception of Christ, we may now turn to the Manhood, and consider that it is (1) a *true* Manhood. 'The Word was made *flesh*;' 'Jesus Christ is come in the *flesh*.'† Under the term 'flesh' we shall include the human *soul* as well as body. For we must not think that the Divine Word was to the body of Jesus Christ as a soul. His is a really human soul and

* To the simple believer in our Lord, to one who makes an 'unreserved self-committal to Jesus as God,' definitions and technical language may not be necessary. It is only because men have from time to time fixed on *partial* truths about Christ, and treated them as though they were the whole truth about Him, that the Church has been forced to safeguard the truth by language which to the lay mind sometimes seems technical and difficult. Thus, the nature of the union of the Divine and human natures in the One Christ had been so grossly misrepresented that the Church had finally to fix on the term 'hypostatic' to express it. The Greek word so used, *ὑπόστασις*, meaning literally 'that which lies beneath' as basis or foundation, had been used by philosophers to denote reality as distinguished from appearance. The word occurs in St. Paul's Epistles (2 Cor. ix. 4 ; xi. 17) and in Hebrews (i. 3 ; iii. 14), though not in the sense of 'person.' It was first definitely applied to the Person of Christ, to indicate the closeness of the union of the two natures, at the Council of Chalcedon, in the year 451 : *εἰς ἓν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν*. The truth signified is that the two natures, the Divine and human, each retaining its own properties, are united in one and the same Person. They are not joined in a moral and accidental manner (as Nestorius taught), nor are they commingled (as Eutyches) : they are 'hypostatically' united.

† John i. 14 ; 1 John iv. 2, 3.

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body. He identified Himself with us—in all save sin (which, of course, was not originally a part of human nature at all). He was born. (2) It was also a *perfect* Manhood. By the agency of the Holy Ghost He was conceived without human fatherhood in the body of 'a pure Virgin'; and 'that Holy Thing' that was born of her was 'the Son of God.'*

If Jesus Christ had made His appearance amongst us by any other way than the universal gate of birth, He would not have been *truly* Man. Had He been born in the ordinary way of conception, and inherited the entail of sin, He would not have been *perfect* Man. The Faith declares that His Mother was specially sanctified by the Holy Ghost (because of the anticipated merit of her Son), so that of her God might take perfect human nature, and pass under the conditions of our life, in order to make the Great Submission, and so regain grace for a race estranged by sin.

The Miraculous Conception is thus fundamental to our entire Christian hope. Many people, however, seem unaware of its tremendous significance. Those who regard the Virgin Birth as a 'detail' show that they have not really faced the issue. The issue is this: Was Jesus Christ the exception to the universal taint of sin? If He were not, if He were a sinful creature like ourselves, then nothing remains to be said for the religion built upon His Person. But if He were sinless, if His human nature were perfect, how came it to be so? He is in that case Himself the miracle, and to regard the source and means of that miracle as a 'detail' argues not merely a want of theology, but an insensibility to ordinary cause and effect. If a perfect and sinless human being had been born of two parents in the normal way, the effect would still demand some 'miraculous' operation—that is to say, keeping to our definition, 'something out of the usual course of nature as known to us'†—to account for it. If, therefore, we appreciate at all the universal taint of sin, and the exceptional nature of

* Luke i. 35.

† See II.

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Jesus Christ, we are shut up to *some* 'miracle' to account for our belief. Without the 'detail' of the Miraculous Conception our religion either ceases to be supernatural or ceases to be rational.*

All who have carefully considered Christ's own claim to centre the life of mankind in Himself, and the response to that claim in the hearts and minds of believers, will at least appreciate the standpoint of the New Testament writers when they regard incorporation with Christ as nothing less than a new departure in the history of the human race; not a something merely individual, as a 'saving of souls,' but as collective and corporate—a restoration of souls into the unity of a true organism, a 'new creation.'†

3

He Who is henceforth the centre of human life declares: 'Behold, I make all things new.'‡ The very name '*New Testament*,' so often on our lips, is significant of this. He is 'the Mediator of the *New Testament*,' or 'Covenant,' between God and man—*i.e.*, of a new relationship between Creator and creature.§ Those who have passed into this relationship are said to have received a 'new name';|| and though they are by nature of many nations, God by this means makes *of all of them* 'one new man.'¶ This *new humanity* is reflected in the individual soul—as the microcosm reflects the macrocosm—for 'if

* The researches of scholarship, unsparing as they have been, have found no ground for rejecting the testimony of St. Luke and St. Matthew that our Lord was born of a Virgin by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Such has been the unanimous belief of the Church ever since St. Luke, 'having a perfect knowledge of all things from the very first,' was moved to write his account 'in order that we might know the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed' (i. 3, 4). Those teachers to-day who unhappily reject the Virgin Birth do so on no better ground than the assumption that 'miracles do not happen'!

† Gal. vi. 15.

|| Rev. ii. 17.

‡ Rev. xxi. 5.

¶ Eph. ii. 15.

§ Heb. ix. 15.

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any man be in Christ, he is a new creation : old things have passed away ; all things have become new.* Consequently, a 'new Jerusalem' is being built by grace, 'coming down from God out of heaven,'† the abode of grace and of perfect harmony with His Will. And, as befits this restoration, we look forward to a 'new heaven and a new earth,' the abode of righteousness, *because* the abode of obedience to God's Holy Will;‡ nay, not only do we 'look for' this consummation of the race, in common with other created beings, but already our 'citizenship' partakes of this character,§ because we 'walk in newness of life,' and serve 'in newness of spirit.'||

It is evident, then, that we use no exaggerated phrase when we speak of the effect of Christ upon the race as productive of a '*new humanity*.' Nothing less is contemplated in the New Testament. It is evident also that any more restricted contemplation, any limitation of the work of Christ to the individual, is inadequate to express the genius of Christianity. This being clear, let us pass to some characteristics of this collective restoration.

The means by which individuals are incorporated into this New Humanity is fittingly and literally a '*new birth*.' When the multitude at Pentecost asked the Apostles what they must 'do,' they were told to 'repent and be *baptized* for the remission of their sins'¶—*i.e.*, they were to be brought into a relationship with the perfect humanity of Christ, 'in Whom was no sin,' through the renewing power of the Spirit; and being '*in Him Who knew no sin*,' both the guilt and bondage of sin would be annulled, so long as they maintained their penitent, Godward attitude. From this supernatural act of the Spirit dated their admission into the New Humanity. Accordingly, St. Paul tells us we are 'baptized into Jesus'; 'baptized into Christ'; 'buried with Christ in bap-

* 2 Cor. v. 17.

† 2 Pet. iii. 13 ; Rev. xxi. 1.

|| Rom. vi. 4 ; vii. 6.

† Rev. xxi. 2.

§ Phil. iii. 20.

¶ Acts ii. 38.

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tism, and risen with Him'; and 'baptized by one Spirit into one body.'* We learn further from the account of Pentecost that all those thus baptized 'continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship; in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.'† Thus they, together with the Apostles and the rest, formed the beginning of that New Humanity of which we are thinking; and we are told that subsequently all those who 'were being saved' were 'added to *them*' by 'the Lord'‡: an indication of what we should reasonably expect of a 'New Humanity'—viz., *unity* of the closest conceivable kind. They were all baptized into one body.

It is because of this unity that Christians are called 'members of Christ.' They are 'members' of Him not as we may become members of a club or a profession. They do not form an association or aggregate of people who meet on a basis of agreement as to opinion or rule. They are not an organization. They are an organism. Their unity is the unity of cells in the living organism. This is implied in the two great metaphors used in the New Testament for the Church—the vine (by our Lord), the human body (by St. Paul).§ The organic unity of the vine and the branches is Christ's picture of the Church. The organic unity of the body and its members, or, as perhaps we might say in the light of modern physiology and with still more force, its cells, is St. Paul's picture. The stress of both illustrations falls on the intimate and interdependent unity of all who make up the New Humanity.||

True, unity is not the only characteristic of the New Humanity. As formed and actuated by the Holy Spirit, it is inspired with an ideal of holiness, and though in attainment it has come far short of its calling, yet that ideal has been maintained, and the

* Rom. vi. 3; Gal. iii. 27; Col. ii. 2; 1 Cor. xii. 13.

† Acts ii. 42.

‡ Acts ii. 47.

§ John xv.; 1 Cor. xii.

|| See the author's *Mystical Body* (Mowbray and Co.).

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lives of the saints in all periods and in all lands witness to the power of the indwelling Spirit to transform human life. On this account it is called 'holy.' Nor is there any other society in the world where holiness is placed before men as a requirement and an aim. Further, because, as we have seen, it is formed on the faith and discipline of the Apostles, it is called 'apostolic.' It looks to the authority invested in them by its Head for its ministry and means of grace. Further still, it is one and the same in faith and practice all the world over, and on this account it is called 'catholic'—a word applied to it very early in its history to distinguish it from spurious rivals. These characteristics, which obviously commend themselves to any serious reflection on the nature of the Church as above indicated, are all gathered up in the Church's charter, the Creed, where belief in the Church as so constituted and characterized is part of the obligation of the Christian life. The leading characteristic, however, that on which all others depend for their efficacy, is that of *unity*. Indeed, we might say that the Church, the New Humanity in Christ, is 'holy, catholic, and apostolic' only because it is *one*; because its oneness is the direct consequence of its relationship to the Son of Man, out of which alone its holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity flow.

It is on the *unity* of the Church, therefore, that stress most needs to be placed when we are describing the work of Christ for the race. In 1 Cor. xii. 12-27 it is evident that St. Paul goes beyond a mere picture or metaphor, and speaks of the Church as literally 'the Body of Christ.' It is a 'body' with which Christ, the Centre or 'Ego' of the spiritual life of the race, is clothing Himself. As our body is composed of millions of cells, brought into it and into touch with our 'ego' from the world outside, so the Church is composed of myriads of individuals, of each of whom Christ is the 'life,' the saving and living Principle. Again, as food is first taken into

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our body and then assimilated by organic processes, so that dead matter becomes in us living cells, so men and women are taken out of the world outside ('called' is the Scripture word for it) into the Church, and so are made 'alive unto God,' and assimilated to the 'mind of Christ' by spiritual organic processes summed up in the word 'grace.'*

From this it is evident that men and women are brought into a 'saving relationship with Christ' through the Society which is inseparable from Christ. As matter which is external to our body cannot have any organic relationship to us until it is received into the body and assimilated, so it is with the world and the New Humanity. Christ has redeemed the whole world in the sense that Divine grace, flowing from His obedience, is attainable by all, yet it cannot be attained while the soul is outside. It is necessary that every soul be brought within the organism by spiritual renewal, that it may be changed into conformity with the perfect Humanity of Christ by the supernatural processes of grace.

Now, there can be no doubt that one of the chief causes of Christianity being misunderstood to-day lies in its manifest want of unity. We cannot, therefore, in a work which aims at removing those causes, content ourselves with stating the theory and ignoring the facts. If the Christianity we are expounding were an inorganic religion of mere sentiment diversely expressed, we might treat unity merely as a desirable ideal and nothing more. Indeed, such a religion would not lead us to expect anything like organic unity amongst those professing it. Such, indeed, is precisely the sort of religion which numbers in our own land and our Colonies have come to profess as Christianity. Taking alarm at the multitude of Christian bodies and their mutual disagreement, many have said: 'Let us reconstruct Christianity on another and simpler basis.' There is, alas! much to justify their attitude, while their witness to

* Note carefully the whole of the passage in Eph. i. 18 and ii.

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some of the finest traits of Christian experience compels our admiration; yet, believing as we do that Christianity is the Body of Christ, we cannot but feel that they are experimenting on a wrong line, and one which in the long-run is bound to carry them as far from the Divine ideal of Christ as is the disunited Christendom of to-day. Once we admit that Christianity is more than a sentiment about Christ and reverence for His example; once we admit a Christian Society into which men and women are incorporated by a Divine act; once we admit that Christ contemplated such a Society, and made provision for it, and prayed that it might be 'one,' there can be no departure from the Divine line marked out, and the divisions of Christendom will not be healed by devising some basis other than its Divine Founder appointed.

When we reflect on the prayer of Jesus Christ, and the purpose for which He made unity essential, we find ourselves at the root of Christianity itself. If there is mistake here, there will be mistake everywhere. 'Neither pray I for these alone [the disciples present with Him when the prayer was offered], but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.'*

Are we to believe in the light of Christendom to-day that this prayer of Christ remains an ineffectual wish? If so, what becomes of the other prayers of the Son of Man for the humanity centred in Him—e.g., the prayer that we should be 'kept from the evil which is in the world'? No one will be bold enough to say that the moral condition of believers is a matter of indifference; then, why should their unity be so? If Christians were indifferent to holiness of life it would be a great scandal; is not their disunion a scandal equally grave? The one defeats the prayer of Christ as much as the other. *The fact*

* John xvii. 20, 21.

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has to be faced that Christ's prayer is not more dishonoured by wilful sin than it is by disunity.

.And the *purpose* for which Christ desired this unity—‘that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.’ That is precisely what the world does not believe at the present time. It is, in fact, the very heart of the unbelief that Christianity has to reckon with. Our difficulty, in the Western world, at any rate, is this: that whatever their attitude towards Christ, men and women stop short of accepting Him as *the* Divine Authority, the final and irrevocable ‘Word’ for mankind. Nor is it possible to see how they can, so long as His followers are divided. The present problems of Christian propaganda are really one problem—the disunity of Christendom. The Church of the first ages did really bring the pagan world to the feet of Christ; but it was a united Church, or, rather let us say, a unity.

This matter has to be faced, and to be faced with the utmost frankness. It seems utterly futile to attempt to patch up the present divisions in the Body by specious interpretations of Christian unity manufactured to meet the present want of it. Having suggested that his readers should ‘put themselves to school to Christianity with a view to knowing what it really is,’ the writer must perforce put his own precept into practice when a real problem of interpretation occurs.

What did Christ mean by His followers being ‘one’? Did He mean an invisible unity—that is to say, a unity visible only to Himself in His Divine omniscience? Such a conjecture is negatived by the purpose the unity was to serve—‘that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.’ Plainly, it must be such a unity as the world can see. And this is made still more emphatic by the two verses which follow those above quoted: ‘And the glory which Thou gavest Me *have I given them.*’ Now, ‘glory’ is used in Scripture as that which proclaims or manifests—*e.g.*, ‘This beginning of miracles did Jesus, and mani-

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fested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him.* Further, the words 'have given' (δέδωκα) indicate something given so that it permanently abides where it is given. 'And the glory which Thou gavest Me have I given them, in order that they may be one, even as We are One; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one'—that is to say, that the whole Christian course of redemption is to take place within this unity, which brings us back to all we have considered about the organic nature of the New Humanity—and then there follows a solemn repetition of the purpose: 'that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me.'

Absolutely, then, there can be no question that the unity our Lord intended is to be outward and visible; it is also to be of a kind with the unity of the Father and the Son. The words, twice repeated, are emphatic. He means a unity visible, indivisible, and indissoluble.

Here I must leave the subject, frankly confessing the unsatisfactory nature of such a conclusion. I am pleading for a right understanding of Christianity, and I believe it is to be understood, not as a collection of varying associations, but as a Body, essentially and indivisibly and visibly *one*. That there is failure here is evident, yet this much at least must be said: it is the failure, not of Christ nor of His kingdom, but of the human will, incomplete in its submission to Him. For the way of unity could not have been made plainer than He made it. The sacramental entrance of the soul into His organism is clear; so also is the soul's sacramental maintenance within it; while no less clear is the apostolic structure by which the whole is held together. Let each one who is named by the Name of Christ ask himself: 'Do I understand Christianity? Have I made my submission to the Divine Plan and Purpose in the mind of its Founder?'

* John ii. 11.

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VII

WHAT IS SALVATION, AND HOW ARE WE SAVED ?

CHRISTIANS are often taunted with a selfish motive in the exercise of their religion. They are said to be mainly concerned with 'saving their souls.'

Now, if a machine which is required for important work be out of order, it is obvious that before it can do the work it must be repaired. This is our view of the relation of salvation first to the soul and then to the service the soul can render. There is much work for each individual soul to do, but it is work that cannot be accomplished with disordered machinery. The first thing, therefore, is to have the disordered will set right by bringing it into harmony with the sovereign Will of God. Not that we have to wait until harmony is *fully* restored. On the contrary, the process involves our applying ourselves, defective as we are, to the work of 'reconstruction.' Christian ethics are not only for the renovation of society; they further the individual's own recovery. But, inasmuch as the work of renovation is God's, the individual must first of all yield himself 'an instrument to God' and be brought under the Divine control. And this brings into play those processes which Christianity comprehends under the word 'salvation.'

I

Let us try, then, to relieve the subject of 'salvation' from the crude ideas which surround and obscure it. Positively, it is the recovery of Divine grace; negatively, the freeing of the soul from sin. In both respects its object is the glory of God.

What, again, is meant by 'the glory of God' as the motive of salvation? This : sin has brought God's

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purpose into disrepute. For example, when people raise such questions as 'How can God permit war?' or 'How can God tolerate the misery under which humanity groans?' we have an instance of the way in which our present life detracts from the glory of the Creator. So unworthy and wretched is human life under the bondage of sin that it has led many to question the existence of a wise and beneficent God. In this sense we have all 'come short of the glory of God.' The motive of salvation, once Divine grace has been recovered, is to live worthily of the love and wisdom of the Creator. And while that is never wholly achieved here, no motive can be so free from the taint of selfishness as the desire so to live. It is the motive of love towards God.

And because God's glory is obscured, not by *my* sin only, but by the sinful condition of the world, the same motive sets me to work to remedy this condition as far as it is in my power to do so. The soul that is in a state of being saved cannot tolerate injustice, oppression, 'impossible' conditions of life, a low public morale, nor the continual cry of the world to be let alone. Neither inwardly nor outwardly can there be any truce between salvation and sin. And then the love of God at work in salvation inspires the heart with love for men and women who are still in bondage. The vision of what God intended them to be adds the most poignant pathos to their present condition, and arouses in the soul the desire to save. Thus the soul that has found its Saviour becomes in turn a saviour. Nor is there any true salvation that does not react on society in this way. This desire, however, does not arise in the soul because of a consciousness of superiority to those around it. Like Dante, who 'hated sin because it hinders loving,' the soul infused with Divine love learns to see and love God's image in men and women everywhere, and is moved to an implacable hatred of sin as well for their sakes as for God's. Love, then, and not selfishness, is the prime motive in salvation: first,

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love of God, and then, for His sake, love of man whom He has made.

But while we would pitch the keynote of salvation no lower than this, the very same love makes allowance for the entering in of coarser and cruder motives, at any rate in some souls at the outset of their repentance. Sin does involve penalty, and union with God is the secret of happiness. Hence the desire for happiness and the fear of penalty may enter into the motive of salvation, and in some cases may even be the actuating motive until Divine grace has restored the vision and recentred the desire on Christ in love. There are some souls to whom the presentment of salvation as an escape from the terrors of hell and their present misery is the only kind of appeal that could possibly be effective. The methods of Whitefield and of the Salvation Army have been instrumental in the recovery of countless lives to holiness and spiritual power. Christ's own sanction seems to attach to such appeals in the fact that the motive of the prodigal when he started for his father's house was merely that of hunger. If men and women were at once accessible to the highest motive of salvation, they would be saved already!

Those who would understand Christianity will in fairness make allowance for the condition of that human nature on which it has to work. At the same time, neither desire for happiness nor terror of penalty is of the essence of salvation. Salvation is the recovery of Divine grace. And the motive of it is love of Him Who has won the grace for us.

2

Salvation is the recovery of Divine grace, and this is effected by means of identification with Christ. The very name 'Christian' signifies a man or woman who bears the Name of Christ, and is in process of being 'made like unto Him.' This means, on the part of the individual, *submission* to Christ, usually

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expressed as repentance and faith—that is to say, a resolute turning *from sin towards* God. While, however, this human condition is essential, it could not, of itself, effect salvation. It can only bring about in the individual a proper disposition to receive Divine grace. Salvation is the work of God, and the utmost we can do is to submit ourselves to it. It is ‘by grace we are saved, through faith.’*

We do not make ourselves Christians. We can no more make ourselves Christians than we can bring ourselves into the world or raise ourselves from the dead. We are made Christians by a creative act of God the Holy Ghost.

Hence salvation, or the Christian life, is on a par with all we know of the Divine working in the world around us. It is well to pause and consider this a moment. All life is the effect of life above it. If the inorganic is to live, it must be taken up and assimilated by the organic. If lower forms of life are to become a part of man’s life, they must be received into his organism, and assimilated and transformed by the means provided to that end. And if man is to rise into the New Humanity in Christ, he also must first be assimilated and then ‘transformed by the renewing of his mind,’† and all of him that cannot be assimilated and transformed by Christ—namely, all that is sinful—must be left behind. Man, in his natural state, is said to be ‘dead.’ From the point of view of the New Humanity he is merely ‘inorganic,’ and it is only by the power of grace that he can be ‘made alive.’ ‘You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.’‡

There are differences, however, as well as resemblances between the work of God in nature and in the soul. In nature the inorganic is raised to life and lower forms of life to higher forms, mechanically. For this we have to substitute, in the case of the soul, the free consent of the will. Again, in nature the assimilated forms are *absorbed* by those which they

* Eph. ii. 8.

† Rom. xii. 1, 2.

‡ Eph. ii. 1.

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enter so that scarcely any trace of their original composition remains; but as regards the soul the end of the process is not *absorption* into the Divine. The soul will forever retain its self-consciousness, though the renewed will will be brought into perfect harmony with the Divine. Such differences need carefully to be borne in mind to-day in view of the vogue of Buddhism and kindred conceptions of human destiny.*

How, then, does this 'gift from above' come to be received by men and women? How is the germ of the Christ-life implanted in the soul? Here, again, we are brought into close touch with God's working in nature. Grace does not normally operate on the soul directly, but through intermediaries called sacraments. This is so closely analogous to natural experience that had Christianity originated in our own age it might have been supposed to have borrowed its system from what we know of nature.

There are many who regard the Church with suspicion as interposing the sacraments between their souls and God. Such may well reflect on the fact that 'the sacramental principle' is everywhere in nature, and most prominently in man's own existence. For our very existence, *e.g.*, we are indebted to the intermediary of parentage. For our maintenance we depend on air and food and, in a measure, light. For our restoration we are normally dependent on medicine, and for our knowledge on the experience of others, either inherited in the form of instinct or received by tuition. In fact, there is not a single department of life in which we are not dependent on 'means,' and the man who declares he will have nothing between himself and God is unconsciously proposing suicide! Now, if our bodily and mental life is, in a manner of speaking, 'sacramental,' is it any wonder that our spiritual life should be sacramental also?

* See Dr. Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, note 4, p. 236.

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3

On this principle Divine grace is first infused into the soul in Baptism. This is plain from Christ's own direction that His Apostles were to 'make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,'* and from His previous declaration that 'except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'† Thus Baptism is a Divine operation, but one mediated by the 'matter' and the 'form'—the water and the word.‡

The bearing of this on the Christ-life of the soul is very marked. We date our Christian life neither from a resolve nor an emotional experience, both of which would be merely human and open to self-deception, but from an *act of God*. This is the Christian's support in temptation, his recall in penitence, his pledge of assurance in hours of depression. Properly understood and valued, its stimulus to action and perseverance is also immense. Unfortunately, many Christians, owing to imperfect teaching, regard their Baptism as an *event* only instead of a *condition* also. This is a great mistake and the source of much weakness. It is like regarding our birth as a past event having no connection with our life and its present activities. Very different is the way in which Cyprian kept fresh the memory of his Baptism as the beginning of a new life: 'So soon as the stain of my former life was wiped away by the help of the life-giving wave, and a calm pure light from above

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

† John iii. 5.

‡ It is impossible in a brief survey such as this to enter upon a defence of infant Baptism. Those who are doubtful will find the subject ably dealt with in Sadler's *Church Doctrine Bible Truth* (London: Bell and Sons), chap. iii. § 4. Let it be said in passing that the fact that the custom was a very early one shows how clearly the primitive Church had grasped the *supernatural* character of Baptism. *Infant Baptism* is the logical corollary of regeneration. That which is done by the operation of the Holy Ghost can as well take place in infants as in adults.

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flooded my purged breast; so soon as I drank of the spirit from heaven, and was restored to new manhood by a second nativity; then, marvellously, doubts began to clear; secrets revealed themselves; the dark grew light; seeming difficulties gave way; supposed impossibilities vanished; I was able to recognize that what was born after the flesh, and lived under the rule of sin, was of the earth earthy, while that which was animated by the Holy Spirit began to belong to God.*

The possession of this gift brings with it the indwelling of grace within the soul, and the other sacraments are directed to this end—our growth in sanctifying grace. Confirmation, like Baptism, involves an act of God. It is not merely the acceptance when we have arrived at 'years of discretion' of vows made on our behalf in Baptism; for Confirmation was in the first instance administered to persons who had been baptized as adults, as it is in many cases to-day. It is the laying-on-of-hands with prayer for Gifts of the Holy Spirit to strengthen us for our witness to Christ.† As such, it is undoubtedly the complement, or even consummation, of Baptism. In the Eastern Church it is administered at the time of Baptism. In the West it is a custom of long standing, in the case of those baptized in infancy, to separate it from Baptism by an interval of years, and so to emphasize its significance as a preparation for the lay-priesthood of prayer and witness.

Baptism and Confirmation (together with Holy Order) are said to convey 'character'—'character' in its original sense of the impress of a seal. Such being their effect, these sacraments cannot be repeated. A person cannot be baptized again, confirmed again, or ordained again. At the same time, neither these nor any other sacraments coerce our will, or 'make' us holy in spite of ourselves. They are not 'magic.' And the unhappy fact is that we do by our free consent

* *Ad Don.*, 4. See *Cyprian, His Life, His Times, His Work*, by Archbishop Benson, p. 16.

† Acts viii. 14-17.

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neglect the help thus given and fall into sin after being baptized.

This seems the appropriate place to speak of a subject which no account of the Christian faith which aims at frankness can afford to pass over—what are called the inconsistencies of professing Christians. It is a subject which cannot be spoken of with sufficient penitence. To those outside it presents one of the chief difficulties in accepting the faith. Too often our lives suggest to others the thought that ‘there is nothing in religion after all.’ Moreover, it is a difficulty which is not easy to meet without seeming to condone sin. If those outside judge us by a high standard, we cannot forget that we ‘ask for it.’ We acknowledge that ‘our profession is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ and to be made like unto Him.’ Yet may we not reasonably ask them to remember that Christ-likeness is a process; that what we profess is, not to be like Him, but to ‘follow’ and ‘to be made’ like Him? And while the New Testament and the precepts of the Church consistently place before us ideals of holiness, it is nowhere assumed that these ideals are completely attainable in this life. The Church on earth is a sphere of recovery—of a recovery which is slow and in which there have always been relapses. Of course, where the character and conduct of the nominal Christian is wholly inconsistent with his profession, the explanation is that he is not trying to co-operate with Divine grace, and in such cases we have again to conclude that ‘Christianity has been found difficult and left untried.’ We do not blame the physician if the remedy is not taken.

To repair these lapses from grace Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance, or Absolution, that the sinner might have an opportunity of making good his repentance, and have a ‘loosing’ from sin as ‘assuring’ as was his Baptism. On three several occasions* Christ conferred on His Apostles the power to remit

* John xx. 21-23; Matt. xvi. 19, xviii. 18.

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sins, and accordingly the Christian Ministry is spoken of as a 'ministry of reconciliation.'* Sometimes this sacrament is called, after the principal act of the penitent, 'Confession.' Confession is the second or central part of repentance, which consists altogether in (a) contrition, (b) confession, and (c) satisfaction.

The chief of these channels or means of grace is the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ—chief, because in it we receive, not only grace, but Christ Himself, present under the species of bread and wine; His Body and Blood, His Soul and His Divinity. Through the Eucharist, the soul, born anew in Baptism, strengthened in Confirmation, raised from mortal sin in Penance, is nourished with Divine Food. 'He that eateth Me, the same shall live by Me.' 'Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you.'† To this solemn mandate from the lips of Christ Himself the voice of Christian experience has ever responded with the Apostle: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."‡ The connection between this Mystery and what we have already seen of the Centrality of Christ and the New Humanity§ cannot fail to strike the reader. Without the Holy Eucharist as the principal sustenance of the soul it would be difficult to understand the stupendous claim of Christ, not only on the submission of His immediate followers, but on all 'those who should believe on their word.' The solemn words, uttered on the night of His Passion, 'This is My Body'; 'This is My Blood'; 'Take, eat this'; 'Drink ye all of this,' 'This do in remembrance of Me,'|| from the first accepted in their plain and literal meaning, can mean only one thing—the centring of the soul upon Christ Himself. It is here that His identification with us, and our identification with Him, gain the highest possible

* 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

† John vi.

‡ Gal. ii. 20.

§ See V. and VI. of this Series.

|| Matt. xxvi. 26-29; cf. Mark xiv. 22-25; Luke xxii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 23-25.

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expression in this life, and so, consequently, does the union of the individual soul with the mystical Body, the Church.

The receiving of this sacrament is called Holy Communion. It effects not only union with Christ, but *communion* one with another by means of His Body and Blood. As food becomes united in the closest manner with the person who receives it, so by the Heavenly Bread of the Eucharist we are most closely united with our Lord and with one another. Further, just as it is the function of food to renovate and restore, so the Divine Food of the Blessed Sacrament forgives those venial sins which correspond to the daily waste of tissue in the body. Again, as hunger naturally precedes our use of food, so the reception of the Blessed Sacrament must be preceded by the hunger of penitence and a deep sense of our need of Him Who comes to nourish us. This hunger is essential to the rightful—or, as it is sometimes called, ‘worthy’—reception of the Holy Communion. So received, the Blessed Sacrament increases in us habitual grace, and strengthens in us the virtues of faith, hope, and love, as well as the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. And, further, the Blessed Sacrament is also the pledge of our eternal life: ‘He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood *hath* everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.’* Hence the words of Administration: ‘. . . preserve thy *body* and soul unto everlasting life.’

In addition to the above there are two sacraments which, unlike those we have noticed, are not binding on all Christians, but are given in order to enable those who receive them to fulfil special callings in life. One of these is Holy Matrimony. This, as well as being the lifelong union of man and woman, according to the law of God universally binding—a ‘state of life’ which only death can dissolve—is also, for baptized persons, a means of grace by which they are helped to be faithful to each other, and to bring

* John vi. 54.

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up their children in the faith. It has been beautifully called 'the sacrament of the Home,' and in it we see the religion of the Incarnation going to the roots of human life, preparing the way for the salvation of those yet unborn, as well as securing patience and forbearance and mutual service in matters which are often monotonous and trying in the last degree.

To-day hundreds of thousands of people enter upon Holy Marriage without any knowledge of what is spiritually implied in it. They are pathetically unconscious that by means of it God gives grace specially directed to the responsibilities and difficulties which they enter upon by their union together. Perhaps the fact that while these words are being written over two thousand cases are awaiting a hearing in the Divorce Courts is the clearest evidence that could be forthcoming of the vanity of a pious convention without faith in the supernatural grace of God!

The other sacrament of 'vocation' is Holy Order, by which grace is given men who are called to serve in the sacred ministry of the Church. It has some close analogies to the sacrament of Confirmation, and it should be clearly understood that while men in Holy Orders are called and separated for the purpose of offering the Holy Sacrifice, administering the sacraments, teaching and ministering in other ways to our need, the entire body of Christians, both men and women, are no less called to a ministry of prayer and witness. The sacrament of Confirmation may almost be regarded as 'lay ordination,' and the grace conveyed by it as given for the purpose of witnessing to Christ in the daily life. Christian people can never afford to forget this. The fact that through insufficient teaching and a degraded idea of Confirmation they do forget it, accounts in great measure for the dead weight of ineffective and sometimes grossly inconsistent Christian lives. Nor would women clamour for a place in the separated ministry did they realize that a ministry of prayer and witness has been laid upon them, the discharge of which demands, in

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and through their daily callings, the whole of their powers.

The remaining sacrament is Holy Unction, in which the priest anoints with consecrated oil persons who are seriously ill, for the forgiveness of sins and the bestowal of spiritual support, and, if God sees well, for their recovery. The Scriptural authority for this sacrament is to be found in St. James v. 14, 15; and ultimately it is no doubt traceable to what we are told in St. Mark vi. 12, 13: 'They anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.' Plainly, it is a sacrament of the Gospel, for no mere ceremonial anointing could produce such effects as forgiveness and healing unless it had been instituted by Christ to that end.

In some parts of the Church, where anointing accompanies Baptism and Confirmation, it is usual to speak of this sacrament as 'Extreme' Unction, meaning thereby the 'Last' Unction, there being no further *anointing*. The word 'extreme' does not, therefore, necessarily mean that the sacrament is reserved for the approach of death. In some quarters to-day there is a tendency to speak of Holy or Extreme Unction as 'the sacrament of *Healing*.' This, however, is to commit a mistake, and to materialize the sacrament. For while it is true that God has in a multitude of cases been pleased to heal the body by means of anointing, it is by no means always so, and to administer or receive this sacrament only with such intention is to narrow most unhappily the scope of its effects. No sacrament acts directly upon the body. The effect is first upon the soul, and only through the soul upon the body. It is safe, therefore, to regard this sacrament always as a special provision for severe sickness; for as sickness brings with it temptations and trials peculiar to itself, so special grace is needed by the soul to bear faithfully the chastisement, and to be fully prepared for that great change in which sickness may always terminate.

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4

In the above sketch I have tried to follow, though very inadequately, the course of the life in grace from the moment the soul is brought into the Body of Christ. Inadequate, however, as it is, it should show us how the Church surrounds the individual from the first with an ordered system of salvation, simple and coherent, and congruous with the great facts of revealed Truth, out of which every detail is taken.

One objection I would like to notice. The world often says to the Christian: 'Do you seriously suppose that God is bound for the salvation of souls to your system?' Our reply is that it is not *our* system at all, but the 'way' of salvation made known to the Church by God the Holy Ghost. We do not doubt that God can save souls by other means, but we regard this, because it is the way revealed to the Church, as His Will concerning *us*. Having such a clear and complete indication of His Will, we are not concerned with what means His love and wisdom may devise in other conditions. Having one way, why should we seek another? There are, of course, those who object to salvation being in any way reduced to a 'system.' We confess that the word is not a very happy one, and yet it is one employed in most departments of life without any serious objection being raised, and unless the way of salvation were reducible to systematized form, how could we act upon it? If God had chosen to save us by some utterly unintelligible miracle of mercy, should we not at once exclaim that a thing which did not come at all within our comprehension was incredible and impracticable?

One other reflection: We have been surveying the system of grace as presented to the mind of the Church. In such a presentment there is always a danger of the mechanical gaining ascendancy over the vital. Here, as in so much else, Christianity shows itself a thing of paradox. While we hold fast by the sacramental system, we cannot forget for a

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moment that the origin and purpose and employment of it all is *life*. Here, again, we may be helped by the analogy of the natural process: in the natural world God uses means to promote our life, and we cannot afford to neglect those means. And to understand and apply the means of food, light, air, precept, experience, we need the scientific ordering of life. Yet the outcome is health, energy, joy, power. So in religion, the means are there, but they are only defined in order that we 'may have life, and have it more abundantly.' A merely mechanical compliance with the sacramental system is no more spiritual life than mechanical compliance with natural law is health and vitality.

It remains to add that the principal function of the soul in its salvation is to allow God to act. To remove obstacles, such as the love of sin and the occasions of sin; and to cultivate dispositions for grace, to prepare the ground to receive the seed and showers and sunlight—this is our task. By the one means we shut out the invading evil; by the other we admit the invasion of grace.

Both these operations call into play the *will*. That which was the instrument of our lapse from God is thus made the instrument of our reunion with Him. And here, again, we see the analogy with the principle of natural growth. Growth comes by exercise; degeneration and decay by disuse. Without Divine grace the will cannot be vitalized into any effort towards union with God. It is as lifeless as matter without energy. But directly Divine grace visits the soul, the will is quickened—be it ever so little—and from that moment onwards Divine power itself depends for effect on the exercise of the renewed will. Faith, hope, and love must be converted into definite acts of will. In this way the increase of grace is assured, and the soul begins to have a definite and conscious experience of God and of salvation. Christ commended a 'violence' in the pursuit of this exercise, saying that the kingdom of heaven is 'taken by

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force.' And, indeed, the simplest observation of life in a child or a young animal shows us with what avidity this principle is carried out in nature, and with what rapidity, in consequence, life develops in cell and tissue and brain. The soul is correspondingly to 'lay hold on eternal life.' An idle, complacent Christian, making terms with the world and the sense-life, is what we should call in nature a reversion to type, a degenerate.

Salvation, then, is not magic, acting independently of man's use and appropriation of its means. Miraculous it is, as standing outside nature, or rather as an invasion of the very Life of God; yet it is dependent on man's response, man's co-operation. There is a sense in which we have to 'work out our own salvation,' and that 'with fear and trembling'; and there is a sense in which 'God worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.'* These complementary sides of salvation could not better be expressed than they are in the Baptism Office of the English Church, where the priest reminds the sponsors that 'our profession is (a) to *follow* the example of our Saviour Christ, and (b) to *be made* like unto Him.'

The care which the Church takes to 'fence' the sacraments—not only Holy Communion, but all of them—illustrates the part assigned to the human will in the work of salvation. The careful preparation before (adult) Baptism, the training of the child before Confirmation, the self-examination enjoined by St. Paul (1 Cor. xi. 28 ff.) on the intending communicant, and the use of Penance which such examination is calculated to promote, are instances in connection with the four general means of grace of the attitude expected of the recipient. The idea conveyed by such provisions is not that of a soul made at once 'perfectly whole,' but of one who is doing his utmost to co-operate with the Physician for his recovery, and throwing the whole weight of his will into the battle with disease.

* Phil. ii. 12.

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BOOKS RECOMMENDED

THE number of books on the Devout Life is legion. The following are suggested for their simplicity and practical character :

Carey, W. J. : *The Life in Grace.* Longmans.

St. Francis de Sales : *The Devout Life*, edited by Canon W. H. Hutchings. Longmans.

McLaren, Bishop W. E. : *The Practice of the Interior Life.* Mowbray.

Drake, F. W. : *Ideals of Holiness.* An introduction, biographical and descriptive, to the great writers on the Christian life of great interest and value. Father Drake's other works, *The Wondrous Passion*, *The Glory of Bethlehem*, etc., are strongly recommended, especially on account of the simple and fervent prayers contained in them. All published by Messrs. Longmans and Co.

Grafton, Bishop : *Christian and Catholic*, chap. xii.

Staley, Vernon : *The Practical Religion*, II., vii., viii.

Staley, Vernon : *The Catholic Religion*, especially III., chap. iii.

Tissot, J. : *The Interior Life.* Washbourne.

Longridge, W. H. : *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola*, with Commentary and Directory. Robert Scott.

Temple, Bishop : *Issues of Faith.* (Lectures on the second part of the Apostles' Creed.) Macmillan.

VIII

WHAT FOLLOWS THIS LIFE, AND WHAT ARE OUR RELATIONS WITH THE DEPARTED?

THE Gospel confirms the almost universal instinct of the human race that all men are immortal. But it does more than this. It 'brings life and immortality *to light*'; and it gives death its true position and significance.

Christianity, however, is in no way a cult of a future life. It is a guide and a power for the life present, with indications of an enormous reserve of revelation for those who 'endure to the end.' It is, therefore, through spiritual submission to Christ and to His Spirit in the Church, and not through intellectual curiosity, that the soul is informed of the life hereafter, and of the communion which most assuredly exists between ourselves here and those who have passed away. So much it seems necessary clearly to premise at the outset.

I

To the Christian, death means the separation of soul and body; it is the most severe change our personality is called upon to experience. Christianity, however, declares that it is not more than a change, and we know quite well that throughout our life we are undergoing changes in their way quite as wonderful. Through all these the 'self' preserves its identity, and there is nothing to lead us to suppose that the identity will be destroyed in the last great change. This, it is true, is not a 'proof' of immortality, but it does remove *a priori* objection to it. It is not within the conclusions of reason to make immortality a certainty. It is revelation alone which discloses personal immortality as a fact. This dis-

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closure is made in the identity of our Lord after His resurrection.

Further, revelation declares that the separation of soul and body in man is the result of sin. On this the New Testament is most definite. 'By sin death came into the world'*—*i.e.*, into the human world. Death had been at work in the world before, as the geological record plainly shows, but the gift of immortality was a part of that Divine likeness which the Creator bestowed on man when He made him human. When he lapsed from God he forfeited this gift and became subject to the operation of a lower law. Human death, therefore, like sin, is 'unnatural'—*i.e.*, it is not a part of God's original plan for man, and on account of its unnaturalness it has for all of us something of terror, though those who are in grace have no reason to fear it.

We gather that the soul, when separated from the body, is not only living, but conscious of life. Sometimes people speak of the departed as though they were in a profound sleep, from which they will not awake until the last day. The state of 'sleep,' however, in the passages in which it occurs in the New Testament† is clearly a metaphor, and refers, not to the soul, but to the body and the disintegration the latter undergoes at death. Other passages lead us to infer a state of conscious activity in the departed, as, e.g., our Lord's words to the penitent on the cross;‡ His own work between His death and resurrection;§ the parable of Dives and Lazarus;|| and the activity of the souls of the martyrs as witnessed by St. John.¶

Revelation also tells us that immediately the soul is separated from the body it is judged,** and its place allotted according to that judgment. This is the

* Rom. v. 12 ; *cf.* the whole chapter, and Garvie, in the *Century Bible*, 'Romans.' See also the author's *Spiritism*, chap. ii., 'The Christian Doctrine of Human Personality.' (S.P.C.K.).

† 1 Thess. iv. 13.

§ 1 Pet. iii. 19.

¶ Rev. vi. 9.

‡ Luke xxiii. 43.

|| Luke xvi. 19-31.

** Luke xxiii. 43.

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‘particular’ as distinguished from the ‘general’ judgment, of which we shall speak presently. St. Thomas Aquinas points out the reason for these two judgments. ‘Every man,’ he says, ‘is an individual person and also a part of the human race. Hence he must undergo a double judgment: one immediately after death, when he receives award individually; the other that which he must undergo as an integral part of humanity.’*

This judgment at death points to two conditions in the life after death: (1) that of those who die in grace, and are allotted a place of purification to prepare them for an eternity of union with God, called the Beatific Vision; (2) that of those who die wilfully impenitent, and continue in separation from God.

Let us pause awhile on the two states thus indicated, since there is much misunderstanding attaching to them in the mind of many to-day. With regard to the *first*, it will be noted that the expression used is ‘those who die *in grace*.’ This does not mean those who die in a state of perfection—assuming such is attainable here—nor—always—those who have lived exemplary lives. The words mean those who have been baptized into Christ. We are never in a position to say of any soul, so united to Christ, however unworthy its life has been, that true contrition has not been at work in the article of death to bring it within the unfailing mercy of God. At the same time, the awful peril of departing this life in a state of mortal sin should arouse us to penitence and perseverance. Our Christian hope, therefore, while it makes no truce with sin, encourages us to plead the merit of Christ for all.

With regard to the state of those who, having had every opportunity of reconciliation with God, die wilfully impenitent, revelation leaves us no option but to believe in the possibility of sin enduring. This belief we derive directly from Christ.† Yet there is prob-

* *Summa*, III., q. lix., a. 5.

† Matt. xviii. 8, xxv. 46; Mark iii. 29.

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ably no part of the Christian teaching which the unbeliever resents more deeply than this. A recent writer speaks of it as 'this odious conception, so blasphemous in its view of the Creator.'* Yet why is it more 'odious' or more 'blasphemous' than the everyday fact that punishment follows transgression? Surely, it is 'punishment,' and, still more, 'sin,' which is so amazingly misunderstood! If, in spite of Christian teaching, people persist in thinking of God punishing us for our sins *vindictively*, of course the doctrine of Hell will appear 'odious' and 'blasphemous.' But Christ Himself and the whole genius of His religion teaches us to dissociate penalty from the idea of vindictiveness. Sin is its own penalty. It is the rebellion of the creature against the Creator. How can a creature rebel against its Creator without thereby forfeiting its true life? Hell means no more than sin means, separation from God. And further, if rebellion against the Creator is possible at all, the obvious and awful truth is that it is possible for ever. If the human will were capable of being coerced into loving union with God, it could never have had the power to depart from Him. The prevalent misunderstanding of Christianity in this particular would seem to arise partly from a superficial view of sin, and partly from the want of a clear perception of what is implied in the freedom of the will.

Of this, however, we may be certain : that it is only *wilful* rebellion that is perpetuated. The root of everlasting punishment is not in God, but in sin. So long as sin remains there can be no union with God, and in that obvious fact lies Hell.

But of whom does this hold true? Of those who, having clearly known the grace of God, have rejected it, and died impenitent. And that is a condition of which God only can judge. We have no right to despair of any—not even of ourselves. As to those who have had no knowledge of the way of salvation, the Church has always committed them to the 'un-

* Sir A. Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, p. 90.

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covenanted mercies of God.' We cannot be better guided in this part of our subject than by the words in which Dr. Pusey sums up the teaching of the Church : 'It is wisest, surely, to leave all blindly in His hands from Whose words Christians, as a body, have received the belief in Hell, ever since He came on earth to redeem us from it. "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." He can reconcile His own attributes, if we abide His time.'*

While the possibility of everlasting separation from God is part of the utterance of Christ, it must be remembered that the message of His Gospel is life and hope. More than once in the history of Christianity our religion has been presented as though it were a revelation of Hell rather than of Life, and in this, as in other connections, error within the Church has been fruitful in misunderstanding outside. It is noticeable that Christ's 'everlastings' are more frequently used in connection with life than with death, and the whole message of the Cross is a positive one, telling of hope for sinful men. The doctrine of Hell will not be repugnant to those who view it in the proportion of the faith. Disqualified as we are for judging the destiny of others, it remains for us to see that we ourselves do not neglect 'so great salvation' as is offered in Christ.

2

The vast majority of baptized persons pass away from this life, if penitent, exceedingly imperfect. That any of us should be at the solemn moment of death in a condition to love and serve God perfectly is an idea which no thoughtful man—let alone earnest Christian—can entertain. In the words of St. Gregory Nazianzen : 'He that hath gone forth from the body cannot become participator in the Divine until the stains on his soul have been removed in the cleansing of Purgatory.' This teaching, so completely at one

**What is of Faith as to Eternal Punishment*, p. 287.

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with common sense, is an integral part of the Christian message. The word 'Purgatory' itself, which means 'purifying' or 'purging,' has been in use in the Church from very early times as the name for the intermediate state or place of purification, and there is no other word which quite expresses the same meaning. It fell into disuse in this country at the Reformation, and with its disuse the present state of souls who have passed away in grace became obscured. There can be no doubt that some very unchristian ideas concerning the life hereafter supervened on this, and that the nemesis of this obscurity is seen to-day in the enormous vogue of Spiritism. On the other hand, it is equally certain that previous to the Reformation, and in some parts of the Church to-day, a crude and mechanical interpretation of Purgatory was, and is still, allowed to take the place of the simple and beautiful teaching of the early Church. What we have to do to-day is to get back this early teaching, and to dissociate it from the abuses which have been allowed to creep in.*

That teaching is simply contained in the words of St. Gregory above quoted. A term of purification is necessary, and it is chiefly passive in its character. To this the soul willingly submits, out of hatred for sin and desire for union with God. It consists in (a) pain of loss—*i.e.*, of longing for God; and (b), in some sort, pain of sense, such as all purification must produce. In both cases, however, pain is alleviated by the sure hope and desire for perfect salvation. We must always remember that the souls in Purgatory are absolutely certain of salvation. They are no longer 'on trial' as we are, and they are removed from the reach of temptation. Hence we speak of them as 'at rest'; and being thus wholly dedicated to God, they are also termed 'the holy souls.'

* The subject is treated more fully in the author's *Spiritism* (S.P.C.K., 1919), chap. iii., and in Mr. Walter Plimpton's admirable pamphlet, *Purgatory, as Taught by Holy Scripture and the Catholic Church* (Guild of All Souls Office, 6, Clement's Inn, W.C. 2).

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When, it may be asked, does this period of purification end? There can be little doubt that Scripture discloses a 'first resurrection' which is taking place at the present time, unknown to the world of sight and sense. 'Blessed and holy is he,' says St. John, 'that hath part in the first resurrection.*' And St. Paul, in one of the most important passages on the subject,† describes those who 'sleep in Jesus' as being brought with Him when He comes to judgment, and their accompanying Him is connected with His own resurrection, and implies that they are already in possession of their resurrection-body. 'This is the first resurrection,' and as the period of purification must vary very considerably with individuals, and those who are 'blessed and holy' appear immediately to have part in this first resurrection, it is most evidently taking place at the present time.

We are not at liberty to teach this as an article of faith, but if it is a correct inference from the passages of Scripture above cited, it is certainly a most important and illuminating contribution to our knowledge of the life hereafter. For in this case those who pass from us in grace may receive their 'perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul,'‡ long before it is customary with us to think it. It also has an important bearing on the completion of our personality, which is dislocated by the separation of body and soul at death. It is the clear teaching of the Church that our complete personality consists of the *union* of soul and body; that the soul, alone, is not complete in personality. The importance placed by Christ on the body, as not a merely transient 'scaffolding' of the soul, but in some way an integral part of human personality, and the stress laid upon the importance and permanence of the body by the sacramental life, and especially in the words of administration in the Eucharist, 'preserve thy *body* and soul unto everlasting life,' all point to a 'bodily' life as

* Rev. xx. 6.

† 1 Thess. iv. 13 ff.

‡ The first of the prayers 'At the Burial of the Dead.'

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the 'consummation' of the perfect work of salvation. It will be understood that this bodily life is intended in the sense of 1 Cor. xv. 44, where St. Paul distinguishes between an animal or 'psychic' and a 'spiritual' body (σῶμα ψυχικόν . . . σῶμα πνευματικόν). Without doubt, what the Apostle has in mind is a body similarly constituted to that in which our Lord appeared alive after His Passion— a body expressing identity, but not subject to the laws which control and limit the 'animal' body; a body under the perfect control of the spirit, and thus transcending the conditions of sense-life. Of this our Lord, as Himself 'the first-fruits of them that sleep,' is, of course, the type. That He is risen, and is living to-day in His Risen Body, affords strong presumption of the possibility of numberless beings whose personality is thus completely restored, who are not tarrying in Purgatory century after century, but have already attained, through their meetness for the Vision of God, their 'perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul.'

3

Meanwhile, it has always been the teaching of the Church that souls undergoing purification are aided by our prayers. The practice of praying for the departed is one which Christianity 'took over,' so to speak, from the earlier revelation to the Jewish Church, and our Lord Himself, as a pious Jew, according to the flesh, must often have joined in prayer for the departed in the synagogue worship. This practice was probably based on the example of Judas Maccabæus as recorded in 2 Mac. xii. 45 (R.V.). St. Paul prays for the probably deceased Onesiphorus: 'The Lord grant him that he may find mercy.'* The inscriptions in the Catacombs prove that during the first three or four hundred years of the Church prayer for the dead was the habitual prac-

* 2 Tim. i. 18; cf. 16.

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tice with Christians. The traditional words of such prayer are: 'Grant *him*, O Lord, eternal rest; and let light perpetual shine upon *him*.'

And here we come to speak of our relations with the departed. Christianity has all along taught, and very early formulated, a 'communion of saints'—*i.e.*, of all those who are 'saints' in the sense of being called by their profession to holiness. These comprise (a) the faithful on earth, (b) the holy souls in Purgatory, and (c) those who have their part in the 'first resurrection.' Between all these there is ever going on an intercommunion of prayer and fellowship. This the Church teaches in the clearest possible way. In her principal act of worship she unites worshippers on earth with 'all the company of heaven'; and she has set apart two days—in addition to those on which particular Saints are commemorated—for the purpose of uniting her members on earth with those who are made perfect, and for praying for the souls at rest.

The inscriptions in the Catacombs, to which allusion has just been made, show that the early Christians were not sundered from their dead, except by sight and sense, and that they not only commended them to God, but invoked their prayers, and they did both with that naturalness and simplicity with which we pray for those in distant lands, and write to them asking their prayers. The testimony of the most valuable and venerable inscriptions in the whole world is that in Christ there is and can be no separation. The whole Church, here and within the veil, is one in Him, its Head. Further, there are instances, and their number is countless, in which God has permitted intercourse of a visible and audible kind—as in the case of St. Perpetua, and in others testified to by persons living to-day. All these instances, however, have been similarly characterized in one important respect; they have come *unsought*; they have been permitted by God for purposes of His own, and they have not been more 'real' than the normal experi-

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ences of His people in prayer and in Holy Communion.

To the Christian the partition between this life and the unseen is represented by a door which opens inwards. We are not to thrust ourselves against it and try to force it, but when God wills He gently opens it and allows us to see and hear. Meanwhile, it is at all times thin enough to admit of our being conscious of those on the other side. And the more we experience the life of prayer and of communion with our Lord, the more closely do we enter into union with the departed—a union which transcends even the vividness of psychic vision. The late Canon T. T. Carter has left it recorded that he was seldom in prayer long before he found himself speaking to and exchanging thoughts with those whom he had known in the Christian life.

It is very notable that the Christians of the Catacombs lived in an age when evocation of the dead was practised outside the Church to an extent not even exceeded by the present vogue of spiritism; yet, vivid as was their sense of communion with the departed, they disallowed every practice suggestive of necromancy. To them all evocation of the dead, all self-determined intercourse with the departed, was a forbidden thing, as it has since remained in the Church. Our own surroundings to-day are wonderfully similar in this and other respects to the gnostic and neoplatonic world in which they lived, and one of the principal misunderstandings to which Christianity is subjected arises out of its opposition to spiritistic practices. On the one hand, it is accused of wishing to stifle speculation as to the life hereafter; on the other hand, it is said to be unfaithful to its early character, which (it is affirmed) was that of a great spiritistic society.*

To this it is sufficient to reply (a) that the spiritual

* Sir A. Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*. See chap. iv. of the author's *Spiritism*, in which the attitude of necromancy, ancient and modern, to Christianity is further indicated.

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manifestations recorded in the New Testament, and in the early ages of the Church—and for that matter in the Church all along—are as absolutely unlike the present method and results of Spiritism as can possibly be imagined. If the New Testament is the arsenal of spiritistic ideas which spiritists claim it to be, how is it that those early inspired by it held all forms of necromancy in horror and detestation? (b) Christianity has no desire to stifle research into psychic phenomena of a reasonable and scientific kind, as the presence of Christians on the P.R.S. from the commencement testifies. Speculation, however, as to the life hereafter is another matter. Of this the Christian has no need, and he could only employ it by assuming an ignorance of the things which God has revealed and the Church teaches. To expect Christianity to join forces with spiritism is like asking Christianity to avow itself agnostic. In fact, spiritism is, on the part of its modern leaders, confessedly agnostic. It sets out to discover what can be known of God, and more particularly of the nature and destiny of man. No Christian can possibly join in such a pursuit without an abnegation of what he holds most sure and precious.

Further, all that the Christian knows and believes about the life hereafter is based on the Incarnation, the fact and doctrine of which are virtually denied and often openly ridiculed by spiritist societies, exactly as they were by the gnostics and other speculators of the early ages. Mr. Ernest Marklew, the author of several tracts on the subject, has declared that if Christianity comprises certain doctrines—the very doctrines, in fact, with which it is identified in these pages—‘a Christian cannot be a spiritist without renouncing his Christianity.’ Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has shown by his attitude to the Incarnation and the Atonement the same striking incompatibility.

Basing his knowledge on the Incarnation, the Christian starts from a point at which the spiritist has confessedly not yet arrived. The spiritual and prac-

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tical problem before him in his daily life is how to attain complete reconciliation with the Will of God, as expressed in revelation and especially in the life of his Saviour. This is his supreme business. Other things—knowledge of the life hereafter for one—fall into proportion. Thus the difference between spiritist and Christian is, above all, one of *attitude*. But there are other reasons which vindicate the wisdom of the Church in her prohibition.

1. As we have pointed out, the complete personality of man consists in the union of body and soul. Those separated from us by death are not at first in full possession of their personality, and by attempting intercourse with them we are forcing our way into the secret chambers of God's processes, at the risk of inflicting serious injury upon them. No doubt in many cases discarnate souls are only too ready to respond to mediumistic and other attempts at intercourse. In the early stages of their new life they long for any sort of return to the familiar conditions of earth-life, but opportunities for such return retard their progress. The amazingly absurd phenomena attending such intercourse, such, *e.g.*, as those so courageously recorded by the author of *Raymond*, illustrate and confirm this view; and one is struck with the preponderance of *young* souls in the recent records of those who respond to mediumistic contacts. The whole weight of the evidence would seem to be against self-determined attempts to establish relations with the departed, which have for a time been broken by death.

2. There is no doubt of the presence of evil agencies. Spiritists like Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir A. C. Doyle admit this, and urge that the greatest caution is necessary. The records of those who have gone any length in the pursuit of this intercourse are full of disconcerting experiences which tend to show that 'caution' is best exercised by leaving the whole thing severely alone. Of course, it may be said, on the other hand, that evil influences are present with us in our daily

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life, and temptations beset us constantly. The Christian is perfectly aware of it, and may reasonably answer that he has quite enough to do in resisting ordinary temptations without bringing on himself others of an extraordinary kind.

3. There is the terrible risk incurred by the medium owing to the inversion of the conscious and subconscious processes of the mind, and the abnormal state necessary to induce intercourse. Such conditions always result in extreme exhaustion, and may lead to the decay of mental power and the wrecking of the life thus exposed. The Christian will regard even risk to a single soul too heavy a price to pay for the satisfaction of his own instinct for intercourse with those he loves, much more for the pursuit of mere speculation and curiosity.

And the same objection holds good, though in a less degree, of those who fritter away valuable time in such pursuits and allow them to absorb more and more of their attention at the expense of devotion to duty and the cultivation of their spiritual life. It is no more religious to become absorbed in curiosity about the unseen than it is to be immersed in any other form of curiosity. It may wear the semblance of religion, because connected with another life, but such pursuits argue a very superficial idea of religion compared with the solid weight which Christianity attaches to carrying out our obligations to God and man, and so preparing ourselves for that strict account which we shall presently be called upon to render of the employment of our time and our powers. Our present life is given us for discipline, not for indulgence, and nothing could be more subversive of the Christian idea of religion than the temper of mind induced by spiritistic practices.

4. Spiritism concentrates the interest upon what, after all, is at best but a part of our whole spiritual life. In this way it resembles the tendency towards the close of the last century to concentrate on intellectual knowledge and pursuits, forgetting how small

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a part these occupy in the totality of our nature. And as that tendency prepared the way for a reaction in which the intellectual is on the whole undervalued, so the spiritistic vogue to-day, unless checked in time, will inevitably lead to a reaction in favour of philosophic materialism, if not to that materialization of life which has proved itself in past ages the direst enemy to spiritual advance.

It is such considerations as these which lead us to acknowledge, when we view the matter calmly and dispassionately, the reasonableness of the Church's prohibition of spiritistic practices. Such prohibition is eminently scriptural, as will be seen on consulting such passages as Lev. xx. 6; Isa. viii. 19, 20; 1 Tim. iv. 1. In answer to those who ask where the Church in modern times has prohibited her members from having recourse to such practices, we can point to the decrees issued by the Western Church, viz., the decree of the Holy Office, June 25, 1840, reiterated July 17, 1847, which made it unlawful to have any dealings with spiritism. A further decree, July 30, 1850, two years after the rise of modern spiritism in America, and the decree of March 30, 1898, condemned all spiritistic practices and all recourse to mediums.

Undoubtedly there are many persons who, in the absence of proper teaching (often through no fault of their own), and in grief for the loss of those they love, yield to the opportunity spiritists hold out to them of being put in communication with the departed. From all our assurances of the reality of the Communion of Saints, if we will but put ourselves in the way of it by prayer and the devout life, they turn away unsatisfied. Their pathetic cry is: 'But I want *him*; I want to speak with him as he was when here; I want to ask him if he is happy and if all is well.' Such a demand must go to the heart of anyone who hears it, especially one who has himself known the harrowing sorrow of separation, and such souls need to be dealt with very gently and lovingly. But the kindest, be-

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cause the true, answer is : ‘ Your craving is natural, but you are exercising it, or rather allowing it to exercise you, on material lines. Unconsciously, you are letting your grief make you selfish. It is for you to move on to him, not to try to bring him back to you. It is right you should love him, and he lives, and you can love him still ; it is right you should want the intercourse, and most assuredly, if you are faithful, you will regain it, but you must want it in the right way. “ The souls of the faithful are in the hand of God.” There you must leave him for the present, while you yourself learn by prayer and communion to develop the higher contacts. God has not extinguished the love, the friendship, the relationship, between you. Nay, that intercourse, the loss of which you grieve, was but the germ of a communion, a oneness of heart and soul, which will be beyond all expression wonderful in the perfected life. To that you must look, while you pray for your loved one, and remain conscious of his presence with you in Christ ; for that you must live, looking for and hasting unto the life of the perfect man.’ In this, as in all else, Christ is the Centre of faith, hope, and love, and all our life and all that pertains to it is ‘ begun, continued, and consummated ’ in Him.

BOOKS RECOMMENDED

- Hutton, R. E. : The Soul Here and Hereafter. Longmans.
Mortimer, Dr. A. G. : Catholic Faith and Practice, Vol. II.,
chaps. xiii. to xix.
Hardy, T. J. : Spiritism. S.P.C.K.
F. A. G. & P. W. S. S. : True and False Spiritualism. S.P.C.K.
Kirsch, J. P. : The Doctrine of the Communion of Saints in the
Ancient Church. Sands and Co.
Stone, Dr. Darwell : Outlines of Christian Dogma, chap. xiv.

IX

WHY NOT 'CHURCH-CHRISTIANITY'?

THE expression 'church-christianity' is suggested by a passage in a deservedly popular novel*—a passage which no doubt represents the attitude of many to-day towards institutional religion :

'It seems to me *the true Christianity* has sprung to life again out here' (in the war area) 'in spite of the horrors, perhaps because of them. *Not church-christianity, but simply the faith of little children : the spirit of service and sacrifice and brotherly-kindness.*'

Now, the virtues that are here extolled—and that they did make their appearance abundantly amid the horrors of the war there can, thank God, be no question—the 'spirit of service and sacrifice and brotherly-kindness,' are Christian virtues. That is to say, when we trace out their origin, we find them to flow from Christ and His first followers; while 'the faith of little children' takes us back to one of the most moving scenes in His Ministry. Yes, unquestionably these are 'true Christianity,' or at least a part of it, and an essential part. Why, then, should they be viewed as distinct from 'church-christianity'? Why should 'church-christianity' be said to be incompatible with them? What is wrong with 'church-christianity'?

I say that this distinction is characteristic of a widespread attitude to-day. It is an attitude I want to examine. I believe it will repay examination, both on the part of 'church-christians' and on the part of those who dismiss 'church-christianity' as something that does not ring true. If I may intrude

* *The Strong Hours*, by Maud Diver.

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the personal note for a moment, I would lay claim to some qualification for the task, at any rate to sufficient understanding of the attitude to enable me to deal with it fairly and sympathetically, since for some years it was my own attitude towards institutional religion, and I am still told that I have a very 'lay' mind!

So approaching it, I feel that this attitude is largely due to a kind of spiritual bohemianism, which, while intensely religious in aspiration and love of right, is repelled by all attempts to organize spiritual effort or to classify experience. It is a revolt against the 'cut and dry.' Now, there is a very real sense in which 'church-christianity,' for reasons I shall give presently, is and has to be 'cut and dry.' And here, if I mistake not, is the *fons et origo* of our impatience with it. It is not a rejection of Christianity *ex animo* at all—though I think it may, and in some cases often does, close the soul to certain great cardinal truths necessary to its guidance. The bohemian is simply 'bored.' He does not pause to consider how much of what he views as 'boredom' may be precisely that discipline of which his own rapid and eager nature stands in need. He dreads the tyranny of 'the schools.' He fancies that for him conformity must end in a pose. Often his life is surrounded by conventionality, and he longs in one department at least to escape its chilling and cramping influence. The very word 'church' has for him something stiff and repellent, savouring of the regimentation of life and all that impedes free movement.

And then it must be confessed that much of the atmosphere of 'church' proves noxious to the free and adventuring human spirit. To-day we are very much more of the open air than were our fathers. We sleep with our windows open, and we love to lie of a Sunday on some heaven-kissed hill or beside the lapping stream. We have passed the epoch of the 'Sunday best,' and are cramped and inconvenienced by other things besides clothes. We have

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drunk deep of Richard Jefferies and 'R.L.S.,' and we rage to go a-rambling—in more senses than one. Dogmas suggest deans, and sermons somnolence, and at the thought of the cathedral close, and Barchester, and the beneficed, and the rector's wife (may she forgive us!), and churchwardens, Sunday-schools and district visitors *et hoc genus omne*, we shrivel and expire!

Is there more in it than this? I think there is. 'Church-christianity'—in this country, at any rate—has reclined over much on privilege, been too secure of prestige, and often enough claimed a social precedence which in the light of its principles is preposterous. It has been to a great extent the monopoly of the clergy, and identified with their temporal interests. These, again, have mishandled their people, and gone against the grain where tact and gentleness should have ruled. They have met difficulties with impatience, and dissenters with discomfort more tangible. Their teaching has too often been of the 'take it or leave it' sort, which is exceedingly irritating to the man who never learns his catechism except as a favour. The stamp of mediocrity is supposed to rest upon them, and it is even hinted that they nourish portly bodies on cates and cream.

Nor is this the worst that can be said. Unhappily, there have been whole periods when 'church-christianity' has lost touch with its ideals and acquiesced in sordid motives and unhallowed aims. By an odd trick of the historic sense, the black patches blind us to the beauty and purity co-existing amongst them, and a single Borgia corrodes and banishes the piety of his time. We are ever more sensitive to the invasion of evil than the presence of goodness—which, by the way, is a profound indication of the truth of optimism. We say Christianity is a failure, when the truth is that it is very difficult to make men and women a success, which is what 'church-christianity' has been admitting since the days of Ananias and

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Sapphira—or, perhaps I should say, of the tares and the wheat. But all these things taken into account—and there may be other elements in the ‘complex’ which I have overlooked—we feel that the agelong attempt to present true Christianity in an organized and institutional form is a universal disappointment, and we want to slough it off and have the virtues of ‘service and sacrifice and brotherly-kindness’ without any of it.

Then arises this difficulty : that the very virtues we admire demand concerted action on the part of men and women if they are to be realized and handed down. It may be futile to say, ‘Where would true Christianity be to-day if it had not been for the Church?’ since, up to the present, the experiment of a separate existence has not been tried. It is notable, however, that where the attempt has been made to start *de novo*, it has issued in ‘churches,’ and those who have most heartily repudiated ‘the Church’ have done so by establishing a church of their own. There is nothing inconsistent or even anomalous in this; it is simply an illustration of the fact that man is gregarious, and that every sort of propaganda necessitates a society. We cannot even make a united tilt against ‘church-christianity’ without perpetuating it, for a church is an association of persons for a given end, and that is precisely what we are when we desire to abolish ‘church-christianity.’

The point that escapes the bohemian is this : how, without an organized medium, are the virtues he loves and believes in to be secure of recognition? How is ‘true Christianity’ to be handed down? There is a good deal more in it than this; but as this is at the bottom of Christianity, both ‘true’ and ‘church,’ let us content ourselves with this one point. Here is something we believe in and want to see as widely shared as possible—‘the faith of little children,’ ‘service and sacrifice and brotherly-kindness.’ How is this desirable combination to be spread abroad? How are we to secure this legacy to

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posterity? That is the problem. It was the problem of Christianity at the first. We may reverently say it was the problem of its Founder.

One thing is quite certain: we can't leave it to mere human nature. The faith of a little child looks very simple and desirable on the printed page, but those who have tried to acquire and practise it know how difficult it is, and how counter it goes to some of our strongest impulses. The spirit of service and sacrifice and brotherly-kindness is so obviously desirable that we have long come to regard it as part of the normal outfit of mankind. It is only when we try to rule our lives by it, and expect others to do the same, that we discover what an 'unnatural' thing it is. When we come to fix our minds on practical ethics we ask in amaze: 'How did these superhuman virtues ever come to be transmitted across the centuries?'

Now, it is just here that 'church-christianity' comes in. Christianity not only means Christ; it means the society He formed. This society is no afterthought of persons desirous of exploiting His message and mission. It starts with Christ. He began it by calling disciples. He legislated for it in the Sermon on the Mount, spoken to disciples. The greater part of His teaching consists of parables illustrating a 'kingdom,' of which kingdom, He tells us over and over again, His society is the visible part. Into this society He appoints a definite entrance, bidding His disciples to 'make' other 'disciples, *baptizing* them.' To this society He gave, before He suffered, a corporate act of worship, which was to bind it evermore to Himself. To this society He promised His Spirit as an energizing and guiding and abiding Presence. All these things are plainly contained in the Gospel account of the origin of Christianity. And when for the first time we see Christianity emerge in secular literature—in the famous letter of Pliny to Trajan written in A.D 112—we find it referred to as a society composed of persons

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making a definite pledge of loyalty. But this is 'church-christianity'—that is to say, it is corporate and organized Christianity. How, then, can we draw this hard-and-fast line between 'church-christianity' and 'true Christianity'?

I would go further: beyond setting this society in being, I do not find that Christ did anything for the future of mankind. Of course, I am not now thinking of that personal side of His work and mission which have been presented in Nos. V. and VI. of the foregoing essays. I mean that He did not commit His teaching to writing. He did not establish any 'system' of ethics. He instituted a ministry and certain sacraments which were to be of perpetual obligation, but He did not leave any definite instructions as to the continuance of the one or the administration of the other. He ventured the whole weight of His religion upon the society He had formed, and He left its organization and development to the interior guidance of that Spirit Whose coming He announced. From this it is evident that He intended that society to be the organ of His teaching and revelation and personal presence. It is even impossible to imagine what would have become of His initial impulse had it not been for this provision.

How are we ever to apply Christianity without it? How has it been applied to us, how has it ever reached us here in the twentieth century, without this organized agency? For example: Christ left a 'ministry'; in the course of Christian experience it became a threefold one, relying for efficacy on its succession to the Apostles whom He commissioned. Christ left a revelation of God and of the knowledge of our spiritual life; in the course of Christian experience these became embodied in a creed which is the epitome of the Christian's spiritual outlook. Christ left no direction, so far as we know, as to His memoirs; but as the band about Him became lessened by death, their members undertook to set down an account in order of those things which were most

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surely believed amongst them. Christ left no direction as to what should constitute the Scriptures; it was not until long after His departure that those writings assumed, by the Church's selection, the form which is familiar to us to-day. To accept these Scriptures—at least, to the extent of informing us of Christ and His teaching—and yet to reject the 'church-christianity' which wrote, selected, and preserved them, is, I think it must be confessed, a wholly inconsistent proceeding.

If, then, 'true Christianity' has all along been contained in and propagated by 'church-christianity,' it follows that true Christianity is 'church-christianity.'

It is all very well to smile at the Sunday-school, with its army of patient if mediocre teachers; at the sermons which bore us—when we give them the chance; at the parson, with his humdrum task (save the mark!) of christening and catechizing and marrying and looking up his flock, but how without these agencies has our own recognition of service and sacrifice and brotherly-kindness been secured? It seems to me, we might as well expect education to go on without schools as 'true Christianity' to advance without 'church-christianity.' Indeed, the analogy is a very close one—so close as almost to identify the things compared. It was as an educational body that Christ formed His Church and trained and commissioned it. It has not always done its work well. It has sometimes closed down and gone off on a holiday, and the tasks have been left unlearned, and much of the progress has been lost. But because the same thing happens in our everyday education we don't assert that what we want is 'true knowledge, real reading, real writing, and real arithmetic,' and not education! I think most teachers would agree with me that up to the present elementary education has proved a very dull business—compared, say, with writing fiction—and they, poor things, have had the thinnest time of any, save, perhaps, the faithful parson. They have had the lowest salaries and the

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least gratitude of perhaps any brain-workers in the community, and they haven't succeeded in stocking the Empire with men and women of genius; yet as a commercial people, so far as we are successful at all, we owe our success in a great measure to the elementary teacher.

I will not insult the intelligence of the reader by carrying over the balance of this argument to the credit of 'church-christianity.'

Our Education Department is notoriously not perfect. And we are all of us too sane to await the perfection of any Government Department before we avail ourselves of its functions. For a practical people the outstanding fact is its necessity. Similarly, we recognize the necessity of *some* form of corporate Christianity if we are to have the advantages of practical Christianity. Then, the question is: first, Can you invent a substitute for the form already in existence; second, Can you guarantee that your invention will escape the abuses and failures incident to the old? Now, here, again, I note a weakness in the bohemian: he has a powerful turn for destructive criticism, but he seldom furnishes any constructive contribution to the problem of human improvement. He sees with terrific accuracy where we are wrong, but—leaving apart the religious solution—he fails to bring forward any means of setting us right. Most contributions to social ethics have been lacking in one thing: the suggestion of a sufficient apparatus to create and maintain a change in human life. We approve sacrifice and service and brotherly-kindness. How to get them incarnate in human life is the problem. Any person coming forward with a new kind of 'church-christianity' equipped for this object will find the world at his feet.

Whether he would find it so for long, whether his new apparatus for promoting the virtues would resist the corrosive of our human imperfection any better than that which invites the bohemian's censure, appears problematic, and until such a panacea is forth-

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coming it is rather futile to speculate on this second question. Meanwhile, what are we to do? Is the old 'church-christianity' so impossible, after all? Is it so riddled with superstition and corruption and vested interests as to be unfit for use? That is not quite the impression one gathers from its tolerably vigorous life to-day. I take back nothing I have said in extenuation of the secularist attitude. *Corruptio optimi pessima*; admitted. Still, one doesn't say that because a machine has broken down it is incapable of fulfilling the object of its invention and must be abandoned. Neither does its breakdown prove the incapacity of its inventor, but rather its mismanagement. To my mind—and I try to look at the thing squarely—the only fact which the darkest of the dark ages really bears out is that Christianity has been found difficult, and the only inference from what is called its 'failure' to-day is that it is found difficult still. But this is a long way from saying that we have no use for it. Such an inference, if applied to aviation, would have stopped aerial transport long ago. In the course of finding the path of the air many machines were destroyed and many lives lost. All that that goes to prove is that it is very difficult for man to adjust himself to a new environment. And there is certainly no task harder than that of spiritual aviation—the task of being 'not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of the mind.' The aeroplane may be perfectly adapted to its element; the pilot can only become so by a series of adaptations.

And, after all, in this severe arraignment of historic Christianity, this attitude of critical aloofness from 'church-christianity,' there is a savour of superiority which does not sit well on the bohemian. For the bohemian is above all else a humanist. Charity, in the guise of tolerance, is the divinity he worships. The one thing he stands in fear of is pharisaism. The prig is his *bête noire*. Yet here he is mounting the high stool of the Donatist, proclaiming to all the world his belief in a 'true Christianity,' his

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devotion to 'service and sacrifice and brotherly-kindness,' yet dissociating himself from the only ties of brotherhood that are visible and tangible, and for the only reason that these brothers of his, judged by his own standard, are not respectable! It is odd that he does not see how his own attitude reflects the worst phases of ecclesiastical exclusiveness. He is a living example of what his first principle—and so far as one can discover his only principle—tells him to avoid! He does not see, with Tyrrell, that 'the Church has to allow and provide for the non-religious temperament, and for the religious temperament in its non-religious moods,' and that it is compelled to recognize 'a certain lower goodness'—in a word, that in every family there are backward children. The grand thing about the family is that it is bigger than the child. And the grand thing about 'church-christianity' is that it is big enough for those who are not big enough for it. Let the bohemian ponder this first principle of good-fellowship, lest he fall into the snare of the superior person.

A refreshing contrast to the attitude we have been discussing is afforded by the testimony of that versatile and cosmopolitan critic, Hermann Bahr. Bahr is better known on the Continent than in England. His diaries during the years 1917-18 have yet to be translated. They consist of notes, varying in length, some of them attaining the scope of a first-rate critical essay, on literature, art, music, and social and political events. All he writes is penetrated with a keen perception of religious values, and all who know his *Himmelfahrt* and the play *Die Stimme* will acknowledge his fresh and stimulating point of view. Among these notes, under date August 4th, 1918, is a discussion of Bloch's book, *Der Geist der Utopie*. After remarking that Bloch—a Jewish writer, by the way—believes that Christ lives and will appear again, Bahr says: 'Bloch lacks only one thing. He lacks, as this present age lacks, not faith, but the Church. For

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it is no longer a question of seizing hold of the idea of religion, but of grasping the necessity of the Church. The fact that spirituality (*Geist*) is unattainable without religion has long been an accepted truth. But that the possession of religion without the practice of religion is not sufficient; that longing, striving, feeling, are not religion at all; that religion only exists in the living activity of the community; that faith as an affair of humanity as a whole, can only be experienced in a Catholic sense; that the religious creature by himself is not a possibility, but is only possible inside the Church—that is the question to-day.'

'The necessity of the Church'—a courageous expression, measured by current thought and feeling, measured by the unceasing output of fiction, which, with the exception of one or two authors, either ignores the very existence of the Church and the place it undoubtedly holds in the hearts and lives of thousands, or else never ceases to call attention to its least spiritual aspects at the expense of its manifest and admitted good! But the admission that 'longing, striving, and feeling are not religion at all, that religion only exists in the living activity of the community'—this, coming as it does from one who is no official advocate, and who started life with the opposite conviction, and one, moreover, whose weight as a critic is beginning to tell in every department in which it was exercised, this is indeed a facing-round on the conventional estimate.

But the interest of Bahr's position is not merely that of a first-rate critic who insists on a revision of canons hitherto unchallenged; of a secular authority who tells us that religion, to be religion at all, must be organized and institutional; the interest of it lies in the clearness with which he sees that to want Christianity at all, to cherish the virtues of service and sacrifice and brotherly-kindness, is to want something which demands co-operation; that Christianity does not invite patronage, but effort. In other words, the approval of Christianity does not meet the situation.

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If we approve it in any degree we are logically committed to its service. Our obligations are not at an end when we acknowledge that organized Christianity is necessary, and desist from poking fun at those who are doing their best under very trying conditions to make it a force. We are implicated in the movement. We are not distributing decorations, but taking off our own coats.

Of course, we have an intense dislike of finding ourselves committed to—anything. We hate to be cornered. We resent—often healthily enough—all logical process, even the logic of facts. And yet—if my bohemianism has not succumbed to the chilling effects of church-christianity—I do not see why we should perform our pilgrimage alone and shun the company of those who are forsaking self for service in the most practical way they can. As I began this long lecture with an admission of my own conversion, I am free to confess that I have found no trammels in creed, no bondage in association. It has proved—for my own contribution—a poor enough adventure; yet richer far in all the things I count of price than the yield of days when

‘Faith sought centre everywhere,
Nor cared to fix itself in form.’

I would have my religion as a Scotchman has his country. It should claim me—every inch and ounce—but it should not obstruct, and it never has obstructed, that fine prospect, the road to London, along which I would blithely travel to the uttermost parts of the earth; the native land holding me the while, and chance encounters with fellow-countrymen offering the prize by the way. I recommend my fellow-bohemian to regard religion anew in the light of Chapter IV. of the *Silverado Squatters*. Only, for that sort of thing, you want a religion of principle, not merely of sentiment.

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Sparrow Simpson, W. J., D.D. : The Catholic Conception of the Church. Robert Scott.

Grafton, Bishop : Christian and Catholic.

Figgis, Dr. : The Gospel and Human Needs. Longmans.

Temple, Bishop : Studies in the Spirit and Truth of Christianity. Macmillan.

Temple, Bishop : The Universality of Christ, Lect. IV. Student Christian Movement.

Garvie : Christ and Civilization. National Free Church Council.
Church : The Gifts of Civilization. Macmillan.

Hardy : A Vision of the Catholic Church. Robert Scott.

There is also much that is helpful on this subject in biographies, such as that of F. D. Maurice, by his son.

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1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general
discussion of the problem.

2. The second part is devoted to a detailed
analysis of the case.

3. The third part is devoted to a discussion of the
results.

By the Same Author

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OF THE FAITH**

A COMPARISON AND A CONTRAST

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